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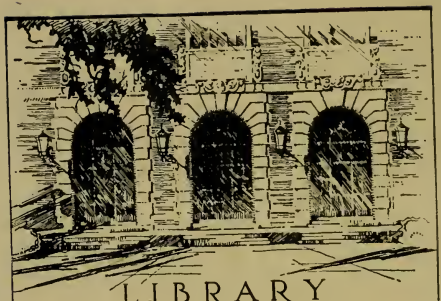

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THE

FRIAR HILDARGO.

A LEGENDARY TALE.

IN FIVE VOLUMES.

BY

EDWARD MORTIMER, ESQ.

VOLUME III.

LONDON:

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Friar Hildargo.

A TALE

OF

THE THIRTEENTH CENTURY.

CHAPTER XXV.

Some months had now passed since the death of Sir Willoughby; and the Lady Anna began to be, in some small degree, resigned to her heavy loss. It was her greatest comfort to offer up her morning devotions at his tomb, and to drop her tears over the marble which inclosed his sacred ashes.

The conduct of Sir Orlando to her, was attention, blended with the highest

respect, and her former sentiments towards him were changed; and she began to hope that the alteration in his deportment arose from the strict sense in which he considered his brother's last words.

She did not wish to impute any improper conduct to Hildargo, but she liked not the fawning behaviour of the monk, and wished that he would again resume his gloomy austerity of manners.

This was the first line of conduct which De Vortimer thought it best to pursue towards the Lady Anna, and which he soon perceived was not disagreeable to her.

The estates which Sir Willoughby had left him, though sufficient, with some trifling œconomy, to live comfortably on, suited not the wants of Orlando, who saw that the possessions of the Lady Anna, would, if once his, be amply sufficient to gratify his extravagant and uxurious mode of living.

As he had now the direction and management of the estates belonging to the Lady Anna, and also the full controul over the household, he gave frequent entertainments to the neigbbouring barons, under pretence of endeavouring to raise the spirits of the Lady Anna, by mixing with society, but in reality, only to gratify his extravagant turn; whilst the Lady Anna retiring early to her chamber, would there muse on the loved idea of her departed father; and she would often wonder how she had ever survived his loss. But though she approved not of the continual company Sir Orlando kept, yet she found herself obliged to appear grateful to him for his attention, since he constantly told her that he did it merely to chace from her mind those melancholy reflections, which else would prey too seriously on her tender frame.

Hildargo had never since that night appeared before the Lady Agnes. He

left his lamp at the door of the outer passage, while he entered her apartment, which he did always at midnight, so that she was prevented the misery which the sight of him would have caused her.

He busied himself in continually reflecting how she could have come to the knowledge of those circumstances; but the more he considered it, the more he was involved in perplexity, since he was unable to discover the source from whence she could have gained her information.

Sir Orlando de Vortimer perceived that his attentions to the Lady Anna had met with the desired reception, he endeavoured, by all possible means, to wean her thoughts from the remembrance of her father, for he flattered himself that then he would possess a favourable portion of them.

In order to give her a mark of his gallantry, and at the same time to display

his courage and skill, he invited the neighbouring barons, and their friends, to a tournament, which he purposed to hold at Manstow. The day fixed for it was that on which the Lady Anna would lay aside the robes of mourning for her departed parent.

It required much persuasion to induce Anna to be present at this festival; but at length, she consented to the united requests of Sir Orlando and the monk.

Preparations were now made; the galleries round the extensive court-yard were decorated with wreaths of flowers, and under the portico of the portal of the center hall, was erected a superb throne for the Lady Anna, who was to preside, and to give the customary rewards to the victorious knights.

The whole of the court-yard was covered with fine sand, to prevent the knights being hurt if overthrown; and barriers were fixed before the spacious entrance within the barbacan.

On the day preceeding the tournament, the folding gates of the great hall were thrown open for the admission of visitors, and the shields of the knights who were to engage in the combat the next day, where, as it is customary, suspended to the lofty pillars. At either end of the hall sat a herald, who watched in case any person should touch them, which was considered as a declaration that he to whom the shield belonged, had done something unworthy a true knight.

In such case the herald immediately took down the shield, and the knight was examined before the others, who either acquitted him, or till he had made it appear that he had not disgraced the order, he was not permitted to engage in the combat, which was considered as the highest dishonour.

In the evening the Lady Anna, and several other ladies who had come to the tournament in the forenoon of that

day, were walking in the hall, surveying the devices on the shields, Anna, who had wandered from the rest, was looking at a shield which had nothing on it but a black cloud; there appeared something so mysterious and extraordinary in the device, that she applied to the herald to know to whom it belonged, but he could not give her any information.

While she was speaking to him, she observed two men muffled up in their mantles, surveying Sir Orlando's shield. One of them was advancing towards it, and was raising his hand, apparently with an intention of touching it. When the other hastily drew him back, and taking him by the arm, retired among the pillars, which soon concealed them from her view.

Greatly surprised at this circumstance, the Lady Anna left the herald, and proceeded down the hall involved in thought; when raising her eyes to

the portal, she saw the two men going out. She mentioned not what she had seen to any one; and soon after joined the rest of the ladies, who were walking on the verdant lawn, which fronted the barbacan, and which was terminated by the extensive sheet of water.

She had not walked far ere she again saw the two men who were walking by the banks of the lake, engaged in deep converse. As she was approaching that way, they hastily retired, as if they shunned observation, and winding round the shores of the lake, they were soon at a considerable distance.

The Lady Anna earnestly desired to know who they were, but liked not to appear curious in inquiring after people who seemed to wish not to be known. She thought too that the next day would develope their mysterious conduct, for that they had some object in view to perform, was perfectly evident.

The next morning, as soon as the

beams of the sun illumined the grey walls of Manstow, the shrill clangor of the warlike trumpets broke on the silence around. The pennons waved on the lofty turrets of the castle, and the guards arrayed in their best accoutrements, were drawn up on each side of the vaulted entrance beneath the barbacan.

The nobles who did not engage in the combats, now attended the ladies to their seats in the galleries, and the judges of the lists took their stations, awaiting the arrival of the knights.

The barriers were adorned with the standards, bearing the devices of the knights who were to contend for the honour of the day; beside them stood the heralds, clothed in their costly tabards, and who now announced the approach of the competitors.

The knights, preceded by their shield-bearers and pages, now entered the barriers, which were thrown open to permit them to pass into the court-yard.

First advanced Sir Orlando de Vortimer on a milk-white steed, that, with foaming mouth which ill endured the golden bit, seemed impatient of controul; and as the trumpets blew a blast, as he passed the barriers, reared aloft, and could hardly be restrained, while Sir Orlando, taking off his helmet, which was unbuckled, bowed low, first to the Lady Anna, and then to the spectators in the galleries.

He then took his station in the lists, his shield-bearer standing on his left side, and his lance-bearer, and pages on his right.

A second blast of the trumpets, announced the arrival of another knight, who ranged himself by the side of Sir Orlando, but whose visor was down; and who only bowed to the Lady Anna, without taking off his helmet; Sir Orlando only doing so, as giving the tournament.

Other knights now advanced, and se-

verally took the stations appointed them by the heralds.

The judges now, according to custom, advanced to the knights, and examined whether any one was fastened on his saddle; they also examined the lances, to see if they were all of a length: and had just finished the inspection, when the trumpet gave notice of the approach of another competitor.

A shield-bearer first advanced, carrying a shield, which the Lady Anna well recollected; it was entirely white, with a rim of gold round it, and the device was a black cloud. She now looked anxiously for the knight, who appeared mounted on a coal-black steed. His surcoat and armour was entirely black, a dark plume nodded over his helmet, the visor of which was down.

When he entered the barrier, he bowed all round, placing his right hand on his breast, with a grace that interested

every one, and then proceeded to the lists.

When the judges advanced to examine his saddle, instead of rising up, as the rest of the knights had done, he in an instant quitted his steed, and stood on the ground, holding the reins in his hand.

When the judges had bowed in token of their being satisfied, he leaped on his horse with an agility that caused a burst of applause from the galleries.

Sir Orlando surveyed this knight with some anger, and looked to see if the Lady Anna likewise applauded his dexterity, and perceived her eyes fixed on the unknown person. If his rage was excited in the first instance, it was doubly so now; and he longed to encounter him, that he might sate his malice, by overthrowing him; he determined not to engage with any other than the unknown knight, and sat waiting with impatience till the signal was given.

Three heralds now rode over the ground, to see if there were any holes which might endanger the safety of the combatants; and then returned back, and passed the barriers.

The Lady Anna had that day left off her sable robes; she wore a mantle of light blue, edged with ermine; her lovely hair was braided, and encircled by rows of pearls; and she looked uncommonly beautiful; the foft bloom of her features had again returned, and her youthful heart began to lose the deep-felt agonies which it had so long endured for the loss of her dear father.

She appeared seated on the throne, with the confessor of the castle, Hildargo, on her right; below her, on each side, were her female attendants; and on the seat at her left, was the present, that was destined for the victor of the day, which was a wreath of laurel, bound round with chains of gold.

The trumpets now gave the signal

that all was ready; when the knight who had followed Sir Orlando into the lists, and who was, if possible, more jealous than him of the applause which the Knight of the Black Cloud had received, resolved to engage him; and as it was his first choice, Sir Orlando being bound to give him, being a visitor, the preference, he directed his herald to advance and touch his shield.

The unknown knight received the challenge, and setting his lance in its rest received on his arm, his shield, the bearer of which, instantly retired without the barrier.

The knight, who was the son of Sir Hugh de Burleigh, who had given the challenge, now rode out of the lists. He was most superbly accoutred. His saddle-bows were richly ornamented with gold; the golden rowels of his spurs proclaimed him of the first order of knighthood. His surcoat was splendidly adorned with emblematic insignia; his

steel helmet was studded with gems, and crested with variegated plumage; his hauberk was of polished steel; and his shield, which was rimmed with a broad hoop of gold, was richly emblazoned with his device, which was a golden eagle bearing a vulture in his talons.

He waited not long ere he saw the Knight of the Black Cloud before him. Spurring his horse, he rushed on him with all the fury of a real foe. The Knight of the Black Cloud bore the shock firmly. Keeping his seat, he now couched his lance, and drove it with such force against his opponent, who received it on his shield, that it tore away part of the rim of gold and hurt his arm.

Again they wheeled round. The lance of De Burleigh struck on the casque of the unknowh knight, and rocked him in his saddle-seat; while he drove his with such force against the

hauberk of his opponent, that he was hurled from his saddle.

Loud shouts from all sides congratulated the unknown knight on his victory; who leaped from his steed, and assisted his foe to rise.

Sir Orlando, overcome with jealous rage at the success of the stranger, rode furiously forward, calling out in a fierce voice, "Behold another antagonist!"

The strange knight was at that moment employed in unbuckling the helmet of his vanquished foe, who appeared to be much hurt; but on the approach of Sir Orlando, he left the knight to the care of his pages, and in a moment vaulted on his steed.

The anxiety of the beholders now increased. They had remarked the generous and attentive conduct of the strange knight to his first opponent; and there were not a few who wished him success in the approaching combat, and marked

with eagerness the actions of each as they commenced the fierce encounter.

The uncourteous manner in which Sir Orlando had conducted himself, could not pass unobserved by the Lady Anna; and she felt a secret wish that he might suffer for it. The generous conduct of the Knight of the Black Cloud had made her feel interested for him, and she noticed with some solicitude their movements.

The combatants in the meantime engaged with eager fury. The spear of Sir Orlando, though driven with great might, by the artful jerk of his rival's head, spent its force in air; while that of the unknown knight slightly struck on the casque of his foe. They now wheeled round again, when the spear of Sir Orlando coming against the saddle, shivered into a thousand pieces. The Knight of the Black Cloud, instantly disdaining to take advantage of that cir-

cumstance, threw aside his lance and reined in his steed.

The pleased spectators at this new instance of his generosity, rent the air with acclamations, which were echoed back by the surrounding walls of the castle.

Enraged to the highest degree, Orlando drew his sword, and rushed with such impetuosity on the unknown knight, dealing his blows with such fury and rapidity, that he almost sunk beneath their force. At length, however, he began to recover from his surprise, and attacked Sir Orlando with such determined valour and skill that he seemed resolved on victory.

The combat hung a long time in doubtful balance, when Sir Orlando, irritated, at length grasped his heavy sword in both hands, and aimed a dreadful blow at the knight, who received it on his shield, and at the same moment struck him with such force on the hel-

met as to split it; when, stunned with the blow, Sir Orlando fell to the earth, while the blood flowed through the gratings of the visor.

The attendants instantly ran forward and raised him up. They unbound the laces of the battered helmet, and found that the blood proceeded only from the nose and mouth of Sir Orlando. The tumult and distress occasioned by this circumstance, being in some degree quieted by the assurances of the pages, that Sir Orlando was not materially hurt; the knight, who had remained on his horse, now seemed to await if any of the other knights would attack him. None, however, came forward. The Lady Anna, who had noticed this circumstance, and seeing him advancing towards her, concluded he came to demand the reward, and was going to take it up, when to her great surprise he stopped, and bowing gracefully to her; turned round his steed, and ere the bar-

riers could be opened, he vaulted over them, and was out of sight in a few moments.

Sir Orlando was instantly borne by the attendants, into the castle, followed by Hildargo; and the Lady Anna, much concerned at the event of the day, withdrew, with her attendants, from the tilt-yard.

The shields and devices were removed from the barriers, and all further combat was stopped. The knights, who murmured at being prevented from displaying their valour, now retired to their several apartments in the castle, to divest themselves of their armour and to prepare for the entertainments of the evening.

Every one was anxious to know who the Knight of the Black Cloud was; but no person could give any information concerning him. The Lady Anna, who still recollected the mysterious behaviour of the two persons she had seen in the hall, and their manifest desire that they

might not be known, by hiding their countenances, made her conclude that the knight in the sable armour was one of them.

It appeared on enquiry, that he had only his armour-bearer with him; and that they did not stay in the castle, but had resided for the two last days in a peasant's cottage not far from Manstow.

Immediately after the shield-bearer had equipped his master, he had rode off to the cottage, where he waited till he was joined by the unknown knight; after which they both hastily departed from the place. Such was their haste, that they did not take away the device that had been placed at the barrier, which was a white pennon, in the middle of which, was the Black Cloud.

When the Lady Anna was informed of this last circumstance, she ordered the pennon to be fixed up in the great hall, that, should the unknown knight at any

future day think proper to declare himself and claim it, it might be carefully preserved for him.

She could not help thinking that Sir Orlando had been rightly served for his furious conduct towards the stranger, for which she could in no way account; and in proportion as she condemned his behaviour, she admired the generous conduct of the knight, and felt a great desire to know who he was.

Sir Hugh de Burleigh was equally anxious to find out the person who had conquered him; and he felt angry with himself, that he had engaged in the lists with a person unknown to him, and who might be no more than a peasant's son.

Full of rage and vexation at this idea, as soon as he had disencumbered himself of his armour, he repaired to the chamber of Sir Orlando de Vortimer, to see if he was recovered, and to consult with

him on the best means they could take to discover and revenge themselves on their unknown opponent.

So base and truly degenerate was his mind, that he sighed for an opportunity of venting his malice on one who had in a fair and honourable way overcome him, and afterwards had treated him with such a generous attention; but which the malicious ideas of De Burleigh construed into an insult.

CHAP. XXVI.

WHEN Sir Orlando de Vortimer came to his recollection, he instantly enquired after the strange knight; but when he heard that he was gone, he broke out in furious invectives at his being allowed to depart.

The glory he had promised to himself from that day's achievements was turned into disgrace; the unceasing wound occasioned by it, rankled in his heart. He had longed to display his military skill before the Lady Anna de Vortimer, and flattered himself that he should bear off the prize due to the conqueror of the day. Instead of which, he had been defeated by an unknown knight, who even disdained to receive the due reward of his skill; as, perhaps, considering the

trifling acts he had performed as not worthy of it.

He at first concluded that it was some secret enemy of his who had thus contrived to disgrace him so much; but he could not bring any one to his recollection who was likely to act in such a manner.

In the midst of these reflections, Sir Hugh de Burleigh entered his chamber. They surveyed each other as sharers in the calamities of the day; and the thoughts of both were alike bent on revenge.

Sir Orlando ordered the attendants out of the chamber, and then condoled with De Burleigh on their misfortunes.

Hildargo, who was present, partook in their counsels, and advised them instantly to send out an armed party after the two unknown persons, and to endeavour to bring them back by gentle means; and if that would not succeed, to use force.

This plan was instantly approved of and adopted by Sir Orlando, and a party of soldiers were quickly mounted; who proceeding towards the cottage where the unknown knight and his attendant had passed the night, they there obtained information of the road they had taken which they immediately proceeded on with all possible haste.

In the hope that the party would be successful in the execution of the business they were charged with, Sir Orlando and De Burleigh by degrees recovered from the great agitation occasioned by their defeat, which they trusted they should soon be able to obtain an ample revenge for. They now separated, to prepare for the sumptuous entertainment which was to be given in the grand hall.

In the open space of the hall was placed an immense table, supported by pillars resembling lions' claws. In the two side aisles, formed by the double rows of pillars which supported the roof,

were placed tripods of silver, in which a quantity of cinnamon wood was burnt, that perfumed the air with its pleasing odour. The pillars were adorned with bucklers, casques, corselets, and other parts of armour, which had been obtained by feats of valour in the ensanguined plain.

Sir Orlando de Vortimer now entered the hall, followed by the nobles, and after them the knights and their pages. A band of music placed in the gallery that was over the portals of the hall, made it re-echo to the sound of their martial instruments.

The folding doors in one of the side aisles of the hall were thrown open, and the Lady Anna de Vortimer appeared, followed by a train of ladies and their attendants.

This beauteous group was directly attended by the gallant knights to their seats at the table. Sir Orlando de Vor-

timer seeing a knight hastily advancing to conduct the Lady Anna to the seat prepared for her, passed by him with a frown on his countenance, which, however, was banished to make room for a smile, as he, taking her hand, attended her to the seat on his right.

Sir Orlando had that day habited himself in the most sumptuous manner. His surcoat was of a deep crimson colour, enriched with silver ornaments. The chain of knighthood hung from his neck, to which was suspended a golden shield; for it was to that order he belonged. His helmet, which was without the beaver, was fastened to his head by cords of pearls; it was richly adorned with the insignia of his family, and on the top waved a crest of crimson plumes.

Chance had so ordained it, that the robe which the Lady Anna wore was also of crimson taffeta, richly ornamented with

silver lace. The similarity of this dress with the surcoat of Sir Orlando, drew on them the eyes of the whole company.

De Vortimer observed it; and while he paid her a salute, in which conscious merit was blended with the tender animation of ardent love, he gazed earnestly on her while he said, "Will the beautiful Lady Anna deign to sit next to one, whom the fortune of the day has hitherto been so unkind to? Will she make up for his hard lot in being overthrown, by her enchanting converse?"

"The fortune of the day, my lord," said Lady Anna with a faint smile, "has not, I find, made you forgetful of the tongue of flattery."

"Indeed, lady," said Orlando, "believe me, you are above all flattery."

Anna answered not; and the banquet being ready, the guests partook largely of the splendid feast. The hall echoed to the sound of the instruments; the hollow-toned timbrels made the hearts

of the knights beat high with military ardour. They listened with delight to the march, the signal of attack, and the trumpet of victory. They were now loud in their carousals. The ruby coloured wine rose frequent to the brims of the golden goblets.

Sir Orlando was singularly elevated. Taking a vase from the attendant, he rose from his seat. "Let us drink, my friends," said he, "to the illustrious order of knighthood."

Each of the guests instantly rose, and seizing their goblets, awaited till Sir Orlando should give the signal.

"May the illustrious order of knighthood blossom for ever!" This said, Sir Orlando raised the vase to his lips, when as he was about to drink, he cast up his eyes and beheld the pennon of the strange knight, by whom he had that day been vanquished, affixed to a column close to him.

He gazed for a while on it, still holding the vase to his lips. His coun-

tenance grew pale, then red, alternately; till at length, in a furious manner he hurled far from him the brimming vase, which shed its contents on the floor of the hall.

The guests, astonished at his conduct, laid down their goblets, and directed their view to what he was gazing at in such an agony of rage. They soon perceived the cause; while Sir Orlando in a loud voice demanded of the attendants who it was that had the daring insolence to fix up that pennon in the hall.

The domestics, who were ignorant of the circumstance, remained silent, and looked with an enquiring eye at each other.

"Vile slaves," said he, drawing his sword, "tell me this instant, or I will pluck the secret from your hearts!"

The terrified attendants now sunk on their knees, and declared their ignorance of the transaction.

" Call then," said he, " the warden of the castle; it could not have been done without his knowledge."

To attempt to describe the sensations of the Lady Anna at this moment would be impossible. The effort she made to remain in her seat was violent. She saw how unadvisedly she had acted in having the pennon fixed there, and sorely repented of it; but it was too late. Her emotions were perceived by the knights and ladies who sat opposite to her, and who surveyed her with some degree of wonder, while a thousand vague ideas of her being acquainted with the circumstance, crossed their minds.

Meanwhile the warden entered the hall. " Tell me instantly," said Sir Orlando, " who it was that placed that pennon there, and by whose direction it was done?"

The man trembled, and for some time was unable to speak. " Delay not,"

said the furious De Vortimer, " or this sword enters thy heart."

A deadly paleness now overspread the features of Anna; cold drops stood on her forehead. The enraged De Vortimer was now going to plunge his sword into the body of the warden, who, fearing to disclose the circumstance, still remained silent. He had raised his arm, when Anna shrieked out, " It was me that did it!" and then with a deep groan, fell senseless from her seat.

Starting at her voice, Sir Orlando dropped his sword. He turned round, and gazed on her with a ferocious look. " 'Tis well, Lady Anna, the insult you intended, is felt."

He now sheathed his sword, and the ladies rising up, assisted in bearing away from the hall the passive form of Anna to her chamber; where she was laid on her couch, and delivered to the care of the ancient Editha.

Sir Orlando now going to the pillar

where the pennon was hung, tore it down, and trampled it beneath his feet. "'Tis thus," said he, "I would serve the mysterious stranger; who doubtless, has good reasons for concealing himself. Some base-born peasant, 'tis like, who may cast the success of this day in our teeth. Would he were this moment within the reach of my sword."

Orlando now took his seat again at the table; but he could not calm the violent ebullitions of his rage, and soon after the guests arose and left the banquet.

The party who had been sent out in search of the unknown knight, hastened quickly forwards after they had been informed by the peasant of the road he had taken, expecting to fall in with them every minute. In this, however, they were deceived. They had now travelled some leagues, and no traces of them met their eye. They ascended a lofty hill, and from its commanding eminence surveyed the country round; the un-

known persons, however, met not their view, and as the shades of evening were now beginning to descend, they thought it was best to return to Manstow castle.

The man who commanded the party, when they arrived, reported to Sir Orlando their unsuccessful attempt, who, enraged at it, would (but for the persuasions of father Hildargo, who represented how useless it was,) have ordered them once more on the search.

He burnt with anger against the Lady Anna de Vortimer for her conduct; and at times believed that she was no stranger to the Knight of the Black Cloud, and that she exulted in his success, and had placed his pennon in the hall purposely to insult him, and keep alive in his mind the defeat which he had sustained from him.

The numerous guests departed early the next morning, excepting Sir Hugh de Burleigh, who remained to counsel

with Sir Orlando and the confessor Hildargo on the means of revenge on the sable knight; when they determined to dispatch a trusty person to endeavour to follow his tract, and to gain information of him. They would then further consult what they should do, and both seemed resolved to wash out the humiliation they had suffered, with his blood.

De Burleigh then departed, Sir Orlando promising to dispatch a messenger to him with the first intelligence that should be received. The idea, that the Lady Anna was acquainted with the Knight of the Black Cloud, now forcibly recurred to his imagination.

"This, then," said he, "is the reason why my attentions were so ill received; why I was treated with scorn and contempt. My curses wither the intruder!" exclaimed he; "But for him, 'tis possible I might long ere this, have possessed the beauteous Anna, and all her vast domains. All but for this accursed

interloper, who has vanquished me in the field, and holds the heart of her I long so much to call mine. She too—tormenting thought! She too, it is plain, combines with him. Yes, did I not observe how her eyes were fixed on him. When he appeared in the lists, how she applauded him too. The circumstance of his not accepting the wreath was well imagined, to blind the enquiring eye. But what need I further proof, even should all these fail, than her causing his pennon to be hung up in the castle hall, that she might feast her eyes on it, and sting me to the heart, by keeping fresh in my memory the defeat I had sustained from him."

Thus did the revengeful Orlando torment himself by his suspicions; in which Hildargo seemed to agree, and who endeavoured to inflame his mind respecting the Lady Anna, so as to make him resolve to enter the more quickly on the plans he had formed respecting his beauteous ward.

" While you are thus deliberating," he would say, " the prize may slip from your hands. Delay not to pursue the measures you ought to have adopted long ere this; if they will not succeed, you know at last what is to be done. The present situation of things, now greatly favours you; every one feels the affront she has put on you, and should even your actions come to light, she will have fallen so low in the opinion of her friends, that they will the less reflect on your conduct. She may possibly have a champion in the sable knight; but if once again he comes within your castle walls, it is unlikely he will find the way out. Go, then, to the Lady Anna, tell her that you think no more of what she had done; that you conceive it was not intentional; she will be glad, no doubt, to be reconciled to you; perhaps, in that moment, you may drive the sable knight from her mind; you will find out her sentiments; and after that, you can act from your judgment. Re-

member I am always in readiness.—The gloom of midnight; the privacy of the altar; and a witness or two, which I will procure, will put you in possession of these proud towers, and the estates attached to them. Fear not, then, to proceed boldly in your undertaking. But lest the bird should in the interim escape, place a careful watch at the castle gates, and let the western ramparts be guarded; this will ease you of that fear. You have now all your desire within these castle walls."

De Vortimer listened attentively to the speech of the monk. "I like, father," said he, "all you propose; but the forced marriage, at least, we must manage to give it another appearance. That, however, must be a future consideration, when our designs are sufficiently ripe to permit us to deliberate on that head. To-morrow I will wait on her, and commence my schemes. Much depends on the manner she receives my addresses and solicitations.

Two days had now passed since the fatal banquet, and Anna had remained secluded in her apartment. Sir Orlando too, descended not to the hall.

The domestics who knew part of the transactions, and supposed a great deal more, wondered much where it would terminate; they well knew how passionate and revengeful Sir Orlando was; and they all agreed that the Lady Anna had been guilty of an intentional affront, though they all most sincerely loved her, yet they could not help now finding fault with her.

The messenger who had been sent to endeavour to find out where the unknown knight was gone, now returned without being able to learn any tidings of him; and De Vortimer found that he must depend on some fortuitous circumstance to find out who he was, and to get him in his power.

He sent to acquaint Sir Hugh de Burleigh with the ill success of the messenger; he now endeavoured to drive

him from his mind, and to turn all his thoughts to what was of far more consequence, his schemes respecting the Lady Anna De Vortimer.

He now fixed on the next morning to visit her, which he meant to do in private, as he wished not to have witnesses of what should pass between them.

During the short time that had now to elapse, his mind was considerably agitated about the event of his present undertakings, which were of such high importance to him.

That night he lay awake, ruminating on the manner in which he should conduct himself. And when at length the morning dawned, he arose, and dressing himself with more than ordinary attention, he paced his chamber, deeply involved in thought, till he judged that the most proper time for the important conversation was arrived.

CHAP. XXVII.

The anxious cares of Editha at length recalled the Lady Anna de Vortimer to life; and by a reviving cordial, her wonted senses slowly recovered their natural powers.

She reflected with much concern at the imprudent steps she had taken, for which her friends must greatly condemn her; she had also irritated Sir Orlando, her guardian, in the most serious manner, for which she felt truly unhappy; and at a time too, when he had conducted himself towards her in so respectful a manner. She now felt that she had laid herself open to his just censure.

This idea weighed heavy on her spirits. She feared to leave her apart-

ments lest she should meet Sir Orlando.

Editha endeavoured to compose the agitation of her mind, but in vain. Anna was self-condemned. She well knew what scope she had given to the tongue of slander to make free with her conduct. She knew that it would be supposed she was acquainted with the sable knight, whom she thought had come to the castle to accuse Sir Orlando of some deed, for she was certain, from the description the peasant had given, at whose cottage the mysterious persons lived, that it was the knight and his armour-bearer that she had observed in the castle hall, and that they were going to accuse him by touching his shield, which the other prevented, choosing rather to wreak his revenge on him by defeating him at the tournament. What motives they might have for such a conduct she was ignorant; but it appeared to her that her ideas were right.

It was now the third morning since the banquet; and as she was sitting pensively at her casement, musing on these circumstances, Editha entered to say that Sir Orlando requested to speak with her.

"With me!" replied the trembling Anna; "Think you, Editha, he comes to reprove me?"

"I know not, my lady," replied Editha, "he does not seem to be in a passion; he spoke quite mild to me."

"What did he say?" demanded Anna.

"First, my lady, he asked how you were? To which I replied, my lord she has been quite miserable since she so unfortunately offended you.

"He now seemed to be thinking of something. 'Good Editha,' at last he said, 'bear this message to your lady, tell her that I wish to converse with her.' I was glad, my lady, to hear him say, good Editha, for I was afraid he

was going to fall into one of his violent passions, by his musing and walking about the room; so I came away immediately to you."

"Go to him then," said Anna, "and tell him, I will attend him in my outer chamber immediately."

Editha now departed; and Anna, endeavouring to compose the agitation of her spirts, prepared for the interview.

When Editha came back, Anna desired her to await her return; and then leaving her chamber, passed on into that in which Sir Orlando was. Her heart fluttered as she put her hand to the lock, and she paused for a moment to regain fortitude to support the interview.

When at length she had regained a sufficient composure, she entered the chamber, where she found Sir Orlando, who was walking about. He instantly stopped, and taking her hand, conducted her to a seat.

" Lady Anna," said he, " I sent to speak with you on an important affair."

" I hope, Sir Orlando, that you will excuse my ill-judged conduct in ordering the pennon to be affixed in the hall," immediately said the blushing Anna.

" But tell me, fair lady, why did you so ?"

" For no other reason," said Anna, " than that it might be forthcoming if the strange knight should come to claim it."

" Do you not know, lady," said De Vortimer, " who that knight is ? Did you never see him before ?" continued he, fixing on her an inquiring look.

Anna blushed ; she seemed confused.

" You blush, lady," said De Vortimer. " I find my suspicions were right. Tell me then, who he is ?"

" It is true, Sir Orlando," replied Anna, who felt hurt at the word suspicions : it is true I was confused when you

demanded if I had ever seen the strange knight before, for I think I saw him in the hall the day before the tournament, in company with his shield-bearer. Their faces, however, I never beheld. They were both muffled up in their mantles, and when first they caught my attention, they were standing opposite your shield."

"To my shield!" said Orlando, much surprised. "Well lady—."

"One of them," continued Anna, "appeared to me to be raising his arm to touch it," (Orlando started,) "but the other suddenly drew him back; they then spoke to each other, and retired from the hall. After that I saw them walking apparently engaged in deep converse on the banks of the lake, towards which, myself, and some of the ladies were directing our steps; when they saw us, they instantly turned about, and were soon concealed from my view. This is all, Sir Orlando, that I know of

this mysterious affair. When I was informed that the pennon had been left behind, I had no other reason than that of preserving it, which made me have it placed in the hall."

Sir Orlando heeded not the latter part the Lady Anna's speech; his mind was completely engrossed by the information she had given him of the two unknown persons. It was evident that their designs were against him; that instead of accusing him publicly, by which means they must discover themselves, they rather preferred to disgrace him in the field, and then to retire, in order that they might have other opportunities of persecuting him. "These then," thought he, "must be my tormentors at the chateau de St. Clair." He trembled at this idea. If that is the case, I must be speedy in my movements, else they may once more prevent my marrying.

He now turned round to Anna, who was watching the variations in his countenance, as his different sensations affected him. "Fair lady," said he, "I am content to believe all you say, and that you had no design to afford me uneasiness by fixing the pennon in the hall."

Anna's countenance now looked more cheerful. "You may, indeed, Sir Orlando, put confidence in my words," she replied.

"But I am now, I fear, beauteous Anna, going to transgress myself," said De Vortimer, "in which case," said he, taking her hand, "may I assure myself of your forgiveness?"

"I shall not, I trust," replied Anna, "be more unforgiving than yourself, Sir Orlando."

"Then," said De Vortimer, "behold me at your feet, sweetest Anna, behold one who has most sacredly, most tenderly loved you. Ah! why does

that frown overspread your lovely features! Why do you thus avert your face! Look on me, I entreat you, with pity; compassionate my situation. Alas! without you, the world would be a blank; but with you, the barren desert a paradise. Oh, my lovely Anna, speak to me, give me some assurance; let me, at least, have some hope, that my tender assiduities—that the devoting to you my life will afford your happiness."

"Rise, Sir Orlando, I intreat you," said Anna, her countenance glowing with indignation; "This converse but little becomes the brother of my father. I pray you, sir, release my hand," said she, endeavouring to disengage it from his grasp.

"My sweet Anna, do not, I intreat, speak so harshly to me; consider, on your decision, depends all my happiness."

"I hope not, Sir Orlando," said Anna, "for I must reject your suit, and that with displeasure."

" With displeasure! Oh, my angel, recal that harsh word; Is it possible those sweet lips could utter so unkind a speech? Tell me to live and hope that at some future period I may be blessed with you whom I so tenderly adore: permit me to seal my pardon on this beauteous hand."

So saying, he attempted to kiss it, but Anna, with a violent effort, got it from him, and started up from her seat.

" Sir Orlando," said she, " I beg you will not add insult to your disgusting professions."

De Vortimer trembled with rage at her contemptuous manner. He rose from the ground on which he had kneeled, before her.

" It is well, Lady Anna; I find the strange knight hath tutored you well to his purpose; you are an apt scholar; but know, that your meditated insult hall not go unpunished. It will be necessary, I find, to increase the vigilance of my

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guards, to keep out these interlopers; doubtless this chamber has often witnessed your secret meetings, contrived by the sage Editha."

"Sir Orlando," said Anna, "know I despise your words, the mean efforts of low cunning. The rectitude of my conduct, I can safely assert, my heart has ever approved my actions."

"I do believe you, lady," said De Vortimer, scornfully; "no doubt that heart bestowed on the sable knight, approves your love for him, and thinks no act wrong that he conceives to be right. Such as the hanging up his pennon before my eyes."

"Sir Orlando," said Anna, "I may not longer stay to hear your insulting expressions; which makes me repent the choice of my father in so unfit a guardian."

"Stay one moment, lady," said Orlando, "I am unfit, because I have found out your conduct with a stranger,

and allow you not publicly to insult me; indeed, lady, your words make me doubtful of the existence of your senses. Must I publish this to the world? Must I proclaim the Lady Anna as one whose conduct demands a scrutinising eye; who must be guarded, nay confined to her apartments, in order to prevent her from consorting with a man, who, for reasons best known to himself, conceals from the world his features, and to whose insulting measures she is obedient, nay, a willing agent?"

"Speak but the truth," said Anna, whose fast flowing tears proclaimed her agitation at this unwarrantable discourse. "Speak but the truth, and I am reckless of the consequences. There is an All-seeing Power above, who knows, and will assert my innocence, and make appear to the world, thy base calumny; which, know, Sir Orlando, I fear not."

Saying these words, she approached the door, when De Vortimer, prevent-

ing her intention of going out, said, in a softer tone of voice, " Will the Lady Anna then do away my suspicions, by consenting to receive my hand; her fair fame and honour will then be cleared before the world, which now stand in a doubtful light."

" No," replied Anna, "not if the world, believing thy false tales, joined thee in invectives against me."

" No! Art thou determined, Lady Anna?" said Orlando.

" I am," firmly replied Anna.

" Then, beware my revenge," said Orlando, opening the door of the chamber, which he flung back again with such force as to make the room shake.

The echo sounded long amidst the lofty corridores, and prevented his retiring steps from being heard. Anna remained in her chamber, wound up in the afflicting sensations which oppressed her agitated bosom.

" Merciful Father!" she exclaimed,

lifting her streaming eyes to heaven, " teach me, enable me to support the load of misery that is now accumulating on me!"—Slowly she now walked back to her chamber, where Editha sat awaiting her return.

She started at seeing her beloved mistress enter the apartment dissolved in tears.

" Merciful Saints! what is the matter?" she exclaimed, affrighted at beholding her. " What has Sir Orlando—"

" Oh, name him not! good Editha; he is the source of my present woe; he has basely aspersed my character; accused me of holding converse with the sable knight, and of combining with him to insult him."

" Aspersed your character!" said Editha; " Oh, false spoken man! no angel was ever more pure than yourself—Let him look at home; but no one will

believe his base tales, lady, comfort yourself."

"Alas!" said Anna, "the slanderous tongue has too many listeners who delight in sullying the fame of the innocent. But this, my good Editha, is not all. He wants me to consent to marry him."

"Marry him!" cried Editha, clasping her hands together; "now Heaven and the Saints forbid, that I should ever live to see that day.—Oh, what a wicked world is this! You marry to your uncle! Why his Holiness the Pope would excommunicate you both; but the father confessor would not surely consent to such a thing—he durst not."

"I fear," said Anna, "the father is too much devoted to Sir Orlando, to hesitate in doing any thing he would wish."

"Ah, I see what he wants," said Editha; he wants to serve you, as he did the lady over in Bretagne, that he mar-

ried for her money, and then used her so ill, that he forced her to run away from him, and the poor lady was murdered by a banditti, who took her son who was with her, away; and he has never been heard of since."

"How long is that ago?" said the Lady Anna.

"I did not hear; but it was some time before he left Bretagne that it happened. Some of the servants tell strange tales of what happened there. One night, just before he came away, he brought a young lady in the dead of night into the chateau. She was a baron's daughter, and her father would not consent to the marriage; so he took her away from his castle, and brought her to the chapel; and just as they were going to begin the ceremony, the ghost of the baron de St. Clair, who was the first husband of the Lady Agnes, (Sir Orlando's wife,) came out of his tomb all in armour, and carried away the bride

back to her father's castle, and frightened Sir Orlando so much, that he left the place."

Miserable and dejected as was the Lady Anna, she could not help faintly smiling at this tale. "I do not," said "she disbelieve that the spirits, when disembodied, still wander on the earth, because I know that nothing is impossible; but I believe it improbable that such supernatural agency should have been called in to prevent the marriage. Oh, heavens!" cried she, musing, "If the spirit of my dear father was permitted to revisit this world, how would he bear the knowledge of my present miserable situation?"

Overcome with grief, the Lady Anna threw herself on a seat, and wiped away the tears as they coursed each other down her lovely cheeks. Editha did all she could to console her; and at length, when she began to recover her wonted fortitude, left her, in order to procure

some refreshment; for the day was far spent, and none of the female attendants had appeared.

Anna had opened the casement to enjoy the pure air, for she was faint with her sufferings, when Editha again returned with horror painted in her features.

"Oh, my lady," said she, "what do you think? Oh, that wicked Sir Orlando!"

"What is the matter?" exclaimed the affrighted Lady Anna. "What has he done?"

"Oh, my lady," said she, endeavouring to recover her breath, "as I was leaving the cedar apartment to get ready your repast, I opened the door to go into the corridore, when who should I see behind it, but one of those great tall fellows that Sir Orlando brought over from France, with a great sword in his hand. 'You must not pass this,' said the gruff mon-

ster. 'Why not?' said I. 'Because I have orders to prevent you.' 'And who, pray, ordered you?' 'Why, Sir Orlando,' said he. 'And is not my mistress to pass through here either?' 'No,' said he. 'And do you dare,' said I, 'to prevent the lady to whom this castle belongs, and all the estates round here, from going about where she likes?' 'Yes,' said the brute, 'if Sir Orlando orders me.' 'Then,' said I, 'I will tell this to my lady.' At which the fellow laughed. 'Come here,' said he, as I was going; 'I want to speak with you. If there is any thing you want to have, I will get it for you; for that was Sir Orlando's order.' So I left him, lady, standing there, to come and tell you of this barbarous treatment."

The Lady Anna had listened to Editha with a kind of disbelief of the words she was uttering. That Sir Orlando should attempt to commit so great an act of oppression, she could not have

supposed possible. But then, his words, that he must confine her to her apartments, in order to prevent her consorting with an unknown knight, came to her recollection. The indignity was too great for her to bear. The way in which the world would consider her conduct, and her character so unjustly traduced, and the idea that she would be avoided and treated with scorn by all who knew her, was too much for her senses to support. She uttered a deep groan, the animating powers no longer held their sway, and she fell senseless in the arms of Editha; who seeing she was fainting, came up just in time to prevent her falling on the floor.

Editha with much difficulty at length recovered her. The first words she spoke were, "Thank Heaven, my father is spared the knowledge of this! Oh, Editha, this is, indeed, barbarous usage!"

In proportion as she reflected on the great indignity offered her, so did she glow with resentment against the author of it. But how was she to obtain redress? Her friends would all be poisoned by the reports of Sir Orlando, who would assert, that he was justified in what he did; her domestics would be of the same opinion. She had not then even a friend to look to, to assist her in her distress.

Deeply did she regret her inconsiderate conduct with respect to the pennon, which had thus given a pretence to Sir Orlando for the commission of his present acts; which she, however, too plainly saw, were the result of much deliberation, and that he only waited for the opportunity she had so unfortunately afforded him, to commence his deep-drawn plans.

CHAP. XXVIII.

Sir Orlando de Vortimer proceeded immediately after his conversation with the Lady Anna, to the monk; who observed on his entering his apartment, from his countenance that glowed with rage, the disturbed state of his mind.

"What is it, Sir Orlando, that has thus greatly discomposed thee? I pray you, sit down, and recover yourself," said Hildargo.

"Father," said De Vortimer, "I am this moment come from the Lady Anna."

"Well, Sir Orlando," said the monk impatiently, "how did she receive you?"

" With the greatest scorn and contempt," replied De Vortimer. " My gentle pleadings—my threats were alike treated. What now, father, shall I do?"

The monk, after musing a while, replied, " Set a guard over her apartments, Sir Orlando. The reason you can give for this act is, the supposed acquaintance with the sable knight. She has luckily herself given ample reason for this supposition; therefore you need not fear the result of this act, for you, as her guardian, are sufficiently authorized to exert your power."

" I am of your opinion, father," said De Vortimer; " and the sooner it is done the better. I will also confine Editha with her, as she will then not be able to influence the domestics in her favour; and in order to prevent the affair being known, for which I can readily account, as being tender of her reputation, I will give orders that the guard at the castle gates do not permit any one to pass out of them."

He now sent for four of his own domestics, and gave them charge to watch alternately at the door of the Lady Anna's apartments, and on no account to permit either her or Editha to leave them. He then issued his commands to the castle-guard; and full of his intended plans, he again repaired to his faithful counsellor, the monk.

It was then resolved, that after an interval of a few days, Hildargo should repair to the apartments of the Lady Anna, in order to endeavour to persuade her to an union with De Vortimer; and if he failed in his mission, Orlando determined to have recourse to coercive measures.

On the second morning, therefore, after she had been confined, Hildargo entered the outer apartment, where he found Editha, who, on seeing him, immediately bent her knee in token of her respect.

" Save you, my daughter," said the monk; " How is the Lady Anna?"

" Holy father, her health is mending. Will you go see her; or shall I acquaint her of your being here?"

" Do so," said the monk; " I do indeed, wish much to see the Lady Anna."

Editha repaired to the Lady Anna. " My lady," said she, " Father Hildargo wishes to see you; he waits your presence in the cedar apartment."

" What can he want with me? Some message, I suppose, from Sir Orlando. Tell him, Editha, I will be with him forthwith."

Editha having delivered her message, resumed her employ; and shortly after the Lady Anna entered the room.

The father arose from his seat at her approach. " The Saints bless you, my fair daughter."

" I thank you, holy father," returned Anna.

" Permit me, lady," said Hildargo, " to hold some private converse with you."

" Assuredly, holy father," said Anna. " Editha, I pray you, retire to my chamber."

Editha having complied, Hildargo resumed his discourse.—" Daughter, I fear I come to you on an unwelcome suit; but Sir Orlando has desired that I would take it upon me, and you, fair lady, must not be displeased at what I say, since the words are Sir Orlando's which I utter. He requests you, lady, to bear in your mind the unpleasant reports that are now breathing abroad respecting your conduct with a person, who is known by no other title than the singular device which he bears. I do not believe it myself," said the monk. " I know that your mind, tutored by the much lamented Sir Willoughby, is incapable of suffering, however your affections might be engaged, of doing any

thing wrong. This, lady, is my opinion."

Anna bowed: "I thank you, holy father," said she, "for it. Believe me, I am truly innocent of the malignant charge with which Sir Orlando oppresses me."

"But, lady, though I have mentioned to you my firm belief, yet the world, judging from outward appearances, greatly condemns you. I will not distress your feelings, by mentioning the unjust reports that every day increase, blackening your fair fame and honour. I know they are false; but whenever I undertake your defence, I am accused of partiality. Sir Orlando has considered your situation. He loves you, lady; tenderly loves you; and has done so from the first moment he saw you. He too, greatl grieves at the malicious sentences that are spoken concerning you. The sensations with which you have inspired him take every moment deeper

root. He has commissioned me to be the bearer of his tender remembrances. He lays his heart at your feet, and prays you to accept it. By that means, lady, you will give a public proof of the falsehoods that now prevail against you; your friends will be satisfied that you could have had no prior affection, which it is now rumoured that you have; and you will live again in an unblemished name, and make truly happy the man that adores you."

The monk now ceased. During his discourse he had raised his eyes to perceive the effect his artful speech had on the Lady Anna. He observed at times that she turned pale, and seemed much agitated; then a faint tinge of the rose would overspread her cheeks.

She remained silent a few moments, and then thus replied: "I feel greatly indebted to you, holy father, for the good opinion you have been pleased to entertain of me, with respect to the

slanderous aspersions against my character. Knowing myself innocent, I neither fear or regard them: time will shew how falsely it has been aspersed. And as to Sir Orlando, father, I believe I need say no more, than that he is too near of kin to me to think of an union."

"If that be the case," said the monk, his features brightening, "the holy church will soon do away that impediment. I can myself easily effect that."

"And if it were done this moment, father," said the Lady Anna, "no persuasions could ever bring me to consent to a marriage with him."

The countenance of the monk now fell. "And must I bear this answer back to him?" said he. "Consider, lady, how much you are in his power, and how greatly it may provoke him. Even now I see he has placed a guard over your apartments; consider what he may do next."

"What can he do more?" returned Anna. "He has taken my liberty from me; he has raised all the false tales that his too fruitful imagination could suggest against me; and he wants to force me into a marriage. He surely can do no more than that."

"No, lady," said the monk; "reflect but for a moment how passionate he is. What more he may do, is uncertain. Beneath this castle, I am informed, there are some horrible dungeons. (Anna turned pale.) Suppose, but the Saints forbid! that he should confine you in one of them. You know his power here is absolute; no one dares disobey him. Consider well, then, lady, of your speech; do not, I beseech you, make me regret having come on this errand. Give him at least some hopes."

"I cannot," replied the Lady Anna, "convey a false idea to Sir Orlando. I mind not the dungeons. Your arguments, father, but fix me in my resolu-

tion. Does Sir Orlando think to force me into a marriage? If he does, he thinks wrong of Anna. The time will soon come, when the power my father so unfortunately vested in him over me, will cease, and I shall be free from his persecution; for it well deserves that title."

"Lady, farewell!" said the monk. "Believe me, it gives me much pain and grief to relate to Sir Orlando the purport of your speech. Your present confinement shocks me: it is now four days since you have offered up a prayer at the altar!"

"It is only that circumstance which grieves my heart," replied Anna. "The sad pleasure I took in counting my beads over my father's tomb is also denied me."

"Lady," said the monk, "if you will promise not to let your attendant be privy to it, I will procure you that indulgence. But it must be at night; for

should Sir Orlando know it, my holy order might not protect me."

"But how shall I pass the centinel, without leave of Sir Orlando?" demanded Anna.

"He is withdrawn at night," replied the monk, "and the key is laid in Sir Orlando's room. As I am every evening engaged with him in religious converse till a late hour, I will take away the key as I pass through that chamber, and then attend you to the chapel."

"Father," said Anna, delighted at having an opportunity to continue her religious meditations and prayers at the tomb of Sir Willoughby, "accept my most grateful thanks for this kindness; which will indeed be a comfort to me."

"If you desire it then, lady, I will attend you there to-night: expect me an hour before midnight."

"I will, holy father," said the pleased Anna.

" But, lady, must I carry that unpleasant message to Sir Orlando ?"

" Yes, father," said Anna; " I cannot dissimulate."

" Farewell, lady," said the monk, with a deep sigh; " the Saints take you into their blessed guidance!" Hildargo now departed, and went to acquaint De Vortimer with the conference he had with the Lady Anna.

Orlando had expected the refusal, and therefore was prepared for it. He was, however, rejoiced to find that the Lady Anna had no suspicions of any designs against her; for the motive of Hildargo in allowing her to enter the chapel at midnight, was, that Sir Orlando might surprise her at the altar, and Hildargo being present, would instantly have the marriage ceremony performed.

Orlando wished to have put his design in force that very night; but this, Hildargo was averse to. " If," said he, " you appear to-night, her suspicions

of my being an accessary, if she has any such, will be confirmed; and it may be more conducive to the welfare of our future schemes that this is not conceived, as that is a thing we must industriously avoid. On the second night you can meet us there, and comport yourself so to me as to blind the suspicions of the Lady Anna."

This, after some solicitation, De Vortimer agreed to, and with impatience waited till the period appointed.

The Lady Anna de Vortimer, when the monk was gone, reflected on his discourse. The picture that the had drawn of the unfavourable reports that were raised against her, distressed her greatly. However, she chose rather to bear that, than ever think of an union with De Vortimer. Some parts of the monk's discourse made her consider him in the light of an agent to his schemes; but then the attention and kindness he had shewn to her, in promising to attend her

to the chapel, did away that idea; and she waited with impatience till the night should arrive when she could indulge her melancholy at the spot that covered the ashes of her sainted parent.

That Editha might have no idea of her intention, she dismissed her at an early hour; and the aged attendant soon retired to her pallet.

She now proceeded to the outer chamber, and lighting her lamp, sat listening to the castle clock, as in hollow tones it told the lengthening hours that brought on midnight.

According to his promise, as the bell had just completed the appointed hour, she heard a key slowly turning among the wards of the lock; the bolt now ran back, and the door opening, Hildargo appeared, carrying a lamp in his hand. "Are you ready, lady?" said he, in a low voice.

"Yes, father," said Anna, throwing a veil over her lovely face.

"Where is Editha?" said he.

"She has retired some time," said Anna; "you need be under no apprehensions concerning her."

"True, lady," said the wily monk; "but my nature is weak, and I should ill support the anger of Sir Orlando."

They now left the apartment, and proceeded along the corridore till they came to the stairs which led to the passage that opened into the grand hall. These they descended.

Hildargo now stopped. "I am afraid, lady," said he, "to cross the castle-court, lest any of the domestics might observe us from the casements that look into it. I believe we must pass the grand hall, and so proceed through the castle."

"Do as you think best," said Anna; "it would perhaps be safer than crossing the court-yard."

Hildargo was of the same opinion,

and now proceeded along the spacious passage that opened into the grand hall.

As they were crossing it, Anna thought of the scene that had so lately taken place there. She shuddered at the thought; and as she passed by the rows of pillars, looked up to see if the fatal pennon was still there; but owing to the small gleam of light afforded by the lamp Hildargo carried, all objects, though but at a small distance, were lost in obscurity.

They now had crossed the hall, and opening the portals that communicated with the other side of the castle, they at length came to the small hall that was in the wing of the edifice, where Sir Orlando de Vortimer resided; they now entered the passage that led to the chapel; Hildargo, when passing down it, often stopped to listen if any person was following him, and he appeared agitated at the least breath of wind.

Anna, in reality partook of his fears, which were only pretended, in order the better to deceive her with regard to the artful scheme he had invented to betray her into the power of Sir Orlando de Vortimer, without her suspicions alighting on him.

They now entered the chapel; Anna proceeded instantly to the tomb of her father; and while indulging her grief, her tears fell fast on the cold marble. The monk, in the meantime pacing the aisle, deeply absorbed in thought.

He flattered himself that the time was now fast approaching, when he should be enabled to carry into effect some plans he had formed respecting himself; and which he had kept in view ever since the mysterious visitant at the lonely mansion on the sea-shore had fallen beneath his dagger. But now a new fear came to his tortured ideas, and this was the means by which the Lady Agnes had obtained a knowledge of his mur-

derous acts. By this it was evident that the deeds of his past life were not confined to Bardino and Pierro. This it was that agitated him, and involved him in a thousand perplexities.

As yet he had not dared to appear before Agnes, but continued to bring provisions to her at midnight. He thought of forcing her to confess to him how she had obtained the information. But again he rejected that idea.

Thus he passed his disturbed moments, till Anna had arose from her knees. Hildargo advanced towards her. " Now, Lady," said he, " will you return ?"

" Yes, holy father," said she, " with many thanks for your great kindness."

" Mention it not, fair daughter, I am happy to serve you, as far as lies in my poor ability," said the monk.

The Lady Anna was truly grateful for his goodness; and the idea now occurred to her, that through him she might make her escape from the castle, should

Sir Orlando persist in his barbarous usage. This thought, and the duty she had just been performing at the tomb of her father, contributed to alleviate the sorrows of her heart; and she returned with a lighter pace through the different halls and corridores that lay in the way to her apartments. When they arrived at the door, the monk unlocked it.

"Lady," said he, "be discreet in keeping this indulgence a secret from Editha; she might possibly, at some future period, relate it, which, if known, would do me much injury in the opinion of Sir Orlando."

Anna promised to acquiesce with the monk's request, the necessity of which, was perfectly clear to her from his representations.

He now asked her, when she would like to go again to the chapel.

At this demand, Anna hesitated; she feared to fix on a period which the monk

might consider too near to her indulgence of that night.

He, however, read her thoughts. "Lady," said he, "I see you fear to be accounted troublesome; believe me, you wrong me if you conceive any other than that I have great pleasure in contributing to your comfort. To-morrow night, therefore, you will again see me, if it should please the Saints, and I am fortunate enough to procure the key."

Pleased at this, Anna gratefully thanked the father, who now went out, fastening the door after him.

Anna retired that night to her couch, full of pleasing hopes, that should Sir Orlando proceed to any acts of violence, she might, through the kindness of the monk, escape from his persecution; she was also pleased to think that she had a friend, who had already given her some comfort; and in indulging these thoughts, she closed her eyes.

But now the pleasing sensations she had enjoyed, when awake, were banished from her imagination, and in her dreams she beheld herself tottering on the verge of a precipice, and a huge mass of stone, which hung over her, appeared to be loosening from its hold in the rock, ready to crush her to pieces. Terrified she awoke; and for some time endeavoured in vain to recover herself from the agitation occasioned by her dream.

At length she became more composed, and fell asleep, when again she imagined herself beneath the trembling rock, and on the verge of the terrible precipice, the depth of which she could scarcely discover; when, as she was meditating which of the dreadful deaths she should endure, whether to take the adventurous leap, and be dashed to pieces, or be crushed under the falling rock, a voice from below called to her, and she beheld the sable knight at the bottom of the valley; she saw him hold-

ing out his arms, and heard him bidding her to throw herself into them; hastily she quitted her dreadful situation; she now quickly descended into the valley; she felt herself giddy with her rapid flight, and with an exclamation of horror, she awoke.

The morning sun now faintly glittered against the casement. Anna arose, pale and unrefreshed with her uneasy slumbers. She tried to find a meaning for her extraordinary dream, but could not. Opening her casement, she inhaled the refreshing breath of morn. She surveyed the extensive sheet of water before her, then the lovely landscape beyond it, and then the glories of the rising sun.

The serenity of the scene made her reflect on her unhappy situation. "Alas!" thought she, "the repose I view, dwells not in my bosom. The tranquillity of nature oppresses me, since

my mind has been so greatly harassed by tempestuous and agonizing sensations."

Thus thought the Lady Anna, as pensively she stood at her casement, resting her cheek on her lovely arm, and viewing the surrounding scenery, the calm serenity of which, formed a painful contrast to the unquiet sensations of her heart, and caused the frequent tear to start from her beauteous eyes.

CHAP. XXIX.

The Lady Anna de Vortimer impatiently waited for the close of the day; from her casement she watched the waving summits of the forest, till they were no longer illumined by the rays of the sun. The crimson glow that had marked where he sunk to other worlds, was now disappearing; the mists of evening arose from the vallies, and a meditative silence began to preside over nature.

She now noticed the deepening gloom; and when unable longer to distinguish any object, she retired from her casement. She had, during the day, reflected on her mysterious dream, but was not able to divine its meaning, farther than that she feared it portended

some calamitous situation she should experience.

Trusting in an All-merciful Power to protect her, she waited impatiently for the confessor, when she might again visit the chapel, and compose her mind by fervent prayer. She took care that Editha should not come to the knowledge of the indulgence of Hildargo, by dismissing her at an early hour, and then repairing to the cedar chamber, she awaited the appearance of the monk.

He came rather before the appointed hour, and the Lady Anna hastily rose up, and without entering into any converse, proceeded with him to the chapel.

Hildargo appeared that evening more than usually gloomy and reserved, and Anna began to fear that he repented of the indulgence he was granting her; she sighed deeply as this idea obtruded itself in her mind; and when the chapel portal was open, proceeded with a melancholy pace to the altar, before which

she prostrated herself, and was beginning her evening devotions, when she felt herself rudely seized by the arm, and turning round, beheld the hated form of Sir Orlando de Vortimer.

Terrified at this unexpected sight, she screamed aloud, while Sir Orlando still holding her, said, " Who, lady, has had the daring insolence to liberate you without my leave obtained? "

Anna was silent; she was afraid to mention the monk, knowing how greatly he was afraid of being discovered.

" Who was it, lady ?" Still Anna was silent. A distant pace was now heard, and Sir Orlando discovered Hildargo. " Ha !" said he, " Is this your doing, father ? How did you thus dare to take such a liberty upon you ?"

" Sir Orlando," replied the monk, with some hesitation, " the performance of religious duties need no excuse, and that was my motive for bringing the Lady Anna here."

" Thy motives, monk, have little to do with my orders; and dearly shall thou rue thy disobedience; if thou dost not, this moment, unite me to the Lady Anna."

" What mean you, Sir Orlando," said the trembling Anna, " by your speech; think you, I will ever consent to such an union!"

" Thy consent, lady, I will endeavour to obtain hereafter; such is my present resolution. Father, I desire you to commence the ceremony." This said, he dragged Anna before the altar, and looked on the monk, awaiting his performance of the service.

Anna, the distracted Anna, looked on him. " Oh, father!" said she, " it is in your power—save me, I beseech you. Wed me not against my inclination, lest the curses of the Almighty fall on you. Leave me, Sir Orlando," continued she, struggling to disengage

herself. "O Merciful Power, look on me, I beseech you!"

Her veil now fell off, and shewed her pale countenance and streaming eyes. Unable to disengage herself from the hands of Orlando, she uttered the most piercing shrieks, while De Vortimer bid the monk begin.

Anna saw him open his missal; she saw that in a few moments she would be made miserable for ever; and a sudden thought struck her, by which she might gain time.

"Hold, father, one moment. If I must be married, allow me at least some time to prepare myself."

"Nay, lady," said De Vortimer, "it requires no preparation, I am content with thy present habiliments. What else wouldst thou wish to prepare?"

Anna, at this moment, by a sudden effort, drew away her arm from Orlando, and hastily ran down the aisle; De Vortimer followed, and caught her

by her flowing robes. Again she supplicated the monk; and screamed so loud, that the vaulted roof of the chapel long resounded with her piteous acclamations.

Sir Orlando was fearful that they might disturb the inhabitants of the castle, and bring them into the chapel. "Lady," said he, ceasing to drag her to the altar, "will you promise, should I let you retire to your apartments, that this day week you will give me your hand?"

Anna trembled at his words; she saw there was no other resourse to gain time; she might in the interval effect her escape; if she refused now, she was certain of being forced to the altar; and scarcely able to articulate her words, she faintly said, "I promise;" and then, but for the arm of De Vortimer, would have sunk on the marble pavement.

The monk now came up, and be-

tween them she was supported to her apartment, Sir Orlando saying, as he was leaving the room, " Remember, lady, your promise."

Anna, after some time passed in an agony of mind impossible to be described, with difficulty entered the room where Editha slept.

" Editha," she faintly exclaimed.

" Who is it that calls me ?" said she, starting up in her bed, where she beheld the pale trembling form of the Lady Anna, supporting herself by holding the door. " Holy Saints," cried she, " what is the matter, lady ?"

" Oh, Editha, rise, I pray you, assist me, or else I shall drop."

The aged domestic hastily left her pallet, and having placed her beloved mistress on a seat, said, " What, lady, has caused your agitation ; have you been dreaming ? But now I look, you have not had your garments off."

" Oh, Editha !" said Anna, " had

what I have endured been only a dream, how happy should I be."

"Tell me, then, dear lady," said Editha, "what is it that has discomposed you so much?"

Anna then related, as well as she was able, the whole of the dreadful occurrences of that night; to which Editha attended, though not without many expressions of horror at the base conduct of Sir Orlando. She endeavoured, as well as she was able, to comfort her with hopes, that during the period that was to intervene, she might be able to make her escape. But Anna silently and mournfully shook her head, while the flood of anguish dimmed the lustre of her lovely eyes.

The morning beams now found her lamenting her cruel destiny, for unless a pitying angel interposed, she clearly foresaw that she would be obliged to perform the promise, which, in the hope

of escaping in the interim, she had made to Sir Orlando.

Meanwhile De Vortimer and his associate, the monk, retired from the apartments of the Lady Anna, rejoicing in the promised harvest of their schemes. He made preparations for his marriage, which soon became known amongst the domestics, who, however, had orders to keep it a secret.

Some few intimates of Sir Orlando, such as Sir Hugh de Burleigh, and two other knights, his friends, were, however, apprised of it, and remained at the castle to partake of the banquets which Sir Orlando invited them to, in order to pass the time that intervened until the completion of his wishes.

Constantine, one of the two men whom Sir Orlando had privately stationed in the chapel to be a witness of the ceremony, saw, with much anguish, the cruelty which was practised against the

hapless Anna, and he felt determined to offer his services to her.

He was one of the men appointed to guard the entrance to her apartments; and had at times been a witness to the misery she was made to suffer by the obdurate Sir Orlando.

His disposition was gently inclined, and full of his humane resolutions, the next time he was stationed at the door, he opened it, and seeing Editha in the the apartment, in a low voice, begged she would acquaint the Lady Anna, that he wished to speak to her.

Much surprised at his request, Editha went to acquaint Anna with it, who was seated at her casement dissolved in tears, and reflecting that the third day was now sinking into the gloom of night, and no hopes that she would be able to escape.

" Lady," said Editha, " the centinel at the door, desires I will tell you that he wishes to speak to you.

"What can he want with me?" said the Lady Anna, "Tell him, Editha, to send me the purport of his business."

Editha now returned, and communicated her message.

"And will not your lady see me," said Constantine. "What I have to say, is of little consequence, unless I see her."

When the Lady Anna heard this, she felt curious, and coming to the outer chamber, demanded of the centinel what his business was that required her ear.

"I hazard much, lady," said Constantine, "but your unhappy fate induces me to risk my life. Tell me, then, in what way I can be of service to you. I am a stranger to the castle, and therefore little fit for what I am so solicitous to perform. I have yet two hours longer to remain here; in that time let me know what I shall do."

The Lady Anna thanked him with much condescension. "Your good in-

tents shall not go unrewarded," said she, " can you not contrive to leave the door of this apartment open, we can then, in the dead of night, come forth and leave the castle."

" Alas ! lady," said Constantine, " the guard have strict orders not to let any one forth ; by that way you would be instantly discovered ; and this door is always locked by the warden of the castle."

Anna was now in great perplexity what to do. At length, after much reflection, she replied, " I have heard that from the armoury there is a passage which leads out into the wood beneath the western ramparts, perhaps that postern may not be guarded."

" I have not heard of that place," said Constantine, " and therefore I am pretty certain that it is not. But how, lady, will you leave these chambers ?"

" That further door," said Anna, " leads out on the gallery that runs over

the portals of the grand hall; if I could open that, I think it might be possible for me to get to the armoury; but I belive the warden has got that key, as it was locked at the same time that the guard was placed here."

"Then," replied Constantine, "I will endeavour, lady, to procure it; but how it is to be done at present, I know not; depend, however, on my good intentions. I will see you at this time tomorrow."

So saying, he closed the door, leaving the Lady Anna in much perplexity as to the difficulties of the enterprize, but resolved to surmount them by resolution and precaution, if she could once leave her chamber.

Constantine had even offered to let her pass at all hazards from the portal he guarded, but Anna rejected the idea, as she well knew his life would answer it; and she also would be subject to a discovery, as she must then pro-

ceed through the inhabited parts of the castle.

The Lady Anna passed the remainder of that evening, and part of the night in painful anxiety. At length, however, a gentle slumber rested on her wearied eye-lids. She rose from her couch as soon as the morning twilight broke on the shades of night, and took her usual station at the casement. Some time after, Editha entered her aparment. "Constantine, my lady," said she, "is at the door." The Lady Anna immediately went to hear what tidings he brought, with a palpitating heart.

Constantine, when he saw her approach, hastily drew from beneath his mantle a large bundle of keys, which it seems he had found in an unfrequented chamber of the castle.

"Lady," said he, "try whether amongst these there may not be one that will fit the lock of that door." If

there is not, I shall not be able to do any thing for you till to-morrow evening, as my turn will not come again till then." Saying this, he quitted the apartment, leaving the keys behind him.

Editha immediately took them up; they were grown rusty with long disuse, and she greatly feared that they would not be of any service. She now tried to insert them in the lock, while Anna stood by in a state of anxiety and agitation not to be described.

Some of them were too large; and others so eat up with rust, that it would have been dangerous to have put them into the lock, for fear they might break in it. At length, however, one appeared to fit it. With some force, Editha turned it round the wards, and the bolts retreated. Transported with joy, Anna beheld the door unclosed; she then desired Editha to return the rest of the keys to Constantine, and to acquaint him with their

success, at the same time inclosing in a piece of paper a valuable jewel, as a reward for his good services.

Much, however, was yet to be done; for she could not leave the castle till midnight, and she might not be able to find out the passage which led from the armoury to the postern.

Editha, from her advanced age, could not accompany her dear lady; and Anna sighed, to think that she must be left behind, to encounter the rage of Sir Orlando.

"Do not think of me, lady," said Editha; "at my age it is of litle consequence, and I may be of great service to you in concealing your flight, which by good management, may be done until the day appointed for the nuptials. By that time, I trust you will be far away from the power of Sir Orlando."

The agitation of the Lady Anna hourly increased. One moment she was afraid Sir Orlando might visit her, and

discover the key, which was in the door, and which they were unable to get out. Another time she thought the monk might come in, for she did not know how to consider his conduct, whether he was privy to the designs of Sir Orlando or not. She felt inclined to acquit him; but the circumstance of his having proposed to her to visit the chapel at the time, which, according to his own account, was after Sir Orlando had retired to rest, and of her then finding Sir Orlando waiting to surprise her at that silent hour, to put in force his base schemes, proved to her that Hildargo, under the mask of religion, bore a heart of dissimulation, and was capable of performing the most horrible acts, that of uniting her against her consent to his hated employer, Sir Orlando.

She was not, however, disturbed by the presence of either; and she anxiously watched the beams of the sun as they slowly withdrew their gladdening

radiance from the objects before her. The shadows of the lofty turrets of Manstow now stretched far over the lawn, while his beams yet glittered on the lake. Now they slowly departed, and a purple misty haze envelloped the eastern horizon, which advanced as the glowing clouds that hung over the western hills no longer illumined by the departed sun, slowly faded away.

The sober mantle of evening now clothed the face of nature, and the breeze of night began to rustle amidst the forests, that now appeared a mass of indistinct foliage.

The Lady Anna now withdrew from the casement and proceeded to the cedar chamber, and listened to the heavy tread of the centinel who paced before the door of the apartment. Another step was now heard hastily advancing along the corridore. Anna trembled, and uttered a petition to heaven to grant her

fortitude. Some words were now spoke in a low tone. A key now turned in the lock, and the bolt was shot into the wall. The steps now retired, and all was silent.

It now occurred to Anna that this was the nightly visit of the warden, and she felt more composed, since it was pretty certain that her apartments would not be visited that night. She waited another hour and then arose, and with a trembling hand threw over her a long veil. Editha surveyed her lady preparing for her adventurous undertaking, and prayed the Saints to prosper her.

Anna now bid Editha farewell, and unclosing the door, advanced along the small passage that led into the gallery; when she suddenly stopped, on seeing a light illumine the wall of the hall which was by the side of the gallery. The voice of Sir Orlando now struck on her ear; but owing to the great distance

it was from her, the words he spoke were rendered unintelligible by the echo which ran along the vaulted roofs.

Taking courage, she softly stole into the gallery; and as she looked through the marble balustrades, she beheld Sir Orlando seated at the banquet with three or four knights. From his violent gestures she perceived that he was much heated by wine. He was engaged in earnest converse with the knight who sat opposite to him, whom Anna discovered to be Sir Hugh de Burleigh.

The sound of her own name made Anna listen with great attention; but the words which followed it were indistinct ere they reached her ear. They seemed to converse now in a lower tone, and De Burleigh leaned forward in earnest attention to Sir Orlando.

De Burleigh laughed at what Sir Orlando said. "Come," said De Vortimer in a louder voice, "let us drink her health." The other knights now stop-

ped their discourse and attended to Sir Orlando, who filling his goblet, said, "Here's to the Lady Anna de Vortimer."

This done, they betook themselves again to converse; when on a question from one of the knights, in which Anna distinguished the words "pennon" and "sable knight," Sir Orlando cast his eyes up to the pillars.

Anna had that moment, the better to hear what their conversation was, raised her head above the balustrades, and caught the observation of Sir Orlando, who started from his seat. "Who is that in the gallery?" said he in a loud voice.

Anna, trembling with affright, sunk below the balustrades and slowly crept back to her chamber; during which time she heard Sir Orlando's voice and the echo of many footsteps in the hall.

Conjecturing they were coming into the gallery, she closed the door of her

chamber, and with some difficulty locked it, and exerting her strength drew the rusty key out of the lock; while she trembled so much that she was almost unable to stand.

Editha, who was more composed, endeavoured to allay her terrors; when the echo of steps along the corridore, and the key turning in the wards of the lock, made Anna precipitately run from the chamber and close the door of the inner apartment.

The portal was now thrown open, and Sir Orlando hastily entered. "Where," said he to Editha, "is the Lady Anna?"

"In her chamber, my lord," said she, "not long retired to rest."

"Art thou certain of that?"

"Yes, truly, my lord.—Lady Anna, are you yet up?" said Editha, standing at the door.

"What wouldst thou, Editha?" replied the trembling Anna.

Orlando satisfied, now quickly left the

chamber, which he locked; and as they were retiring along the corridore, Editha heard one of them say, "It must have been some domestic whom you saw, Sir Orlando, who was curious to listen to our conversation." More words were uttered; but they were rendered indistinct by the noise of their footsteps, and soon after all was silent.

Anna began to recover from her fears, and waited a long time ere she again ventured to put the key into the lock. At length, gathering courage, she opened it, and softly stole into the gallery.

The hall was involved in darkness, Sir Orlando and his companions had retired. She was now in a fresh dilemma; for it was impossible for her to find her way without a light. Her only hope was, that it now being the silent hour of midnight, the inhabitants of the castle might have retired to rest. She had to go through the chapel, where she knew there was a door that led into the ar-

moury, and from that place there was a subterraneous passage to the western postern.

The undertaking was a bold one; but if it did not succeed, she must wed Sir Orlando. This horrible idea made her exert herself; and proceeding down the stairs, at length crossed the hall which was in Sir Orlando's wing of the castle; often stopping in fearful suspense at every noise which the wind, that blew in sudden gusts along the corridores, occasioned.

Anna now advanced to the door of the chapel, which she found open, while a faint glimmering of light appeared at a distance. Anna stood still in an agony of terror, uncertain whether to advance or to retire along the passage. At length, shrouding her lamp, she suddenly darted forwards, and concealed herself behind a tomb.

She now heard the echo of steps slowly treading along the aisle, and soon

discovered a figure advancing towards the portal she had just quitted. What was the surprise of Anna, when she beheld Hildargo carrying a small basket and a lamp, pass by her, and quit the chapel. She stood some time listening to his receding steps, and wondering what could have engaged him at such a late hour in that place. At length she ventured to uncover her light, and with a trembling pace proceeded to the side aisle of the chapel, starting at the banners which were affixed to the lofty columns, as they waved with the gale that found entrance through the different passages that opened into the chapel.

The moon now streamed through the large casement over the altar, and its silver beams shone full upon the tomb of Sir Willoughby de Vortimer. An immutable impulse made Anna advance towards it.

"Oh, my father!" thought she, as she kissed the cold marble; "methinks

thy spirit, didst thou know my hapless state, would arise to revenge my wrongs! Alas! I am now flying from my own castle, to avoid the cruel, base guardian, that thou, who little knew his real character, didst appoint to protect me, and to be to me, a parent in your stead, when you were claimed by the remorseless hand of death! Heaven knows," continued she, "when I shall next shed the tear of filial affection and duty over thy grave!"

She now kissed the cold marble, while her tears fast poured on it, and with a deep sigh proceeded to the passage that led to the armoury, after casting a lingering look on the tomb till the columns that supported the roof hid it from her sight.

She found the door she sought, unfastened, and she entered on the long passage. This she swiftly passed, and drew back with great difficulty the rusty bolts of the door of the armoury, which required all her strength to force open. At

length it slowly creaked on its hinges, and disclosed a large chamber, or rather hall, filled with breast-plates, corselets, helmets, bucklers, swords, spears, and lances, in one place; in another were the accoutrements for the war horses, consisting of breast-plates of mail, saddles, and various other articles. There were also piles of all sorts of missile weapons, the sling, the javelin, and piles of bows and arrows.

Anna slightly surveyed these, and looked anxiously around for the entrance to the passage. At length, in a deep recess at the further end of the armoury she discovered a small gothic door, strongly defended by iron studs, and immense bolts, which ran far into the stone-work. These, from the dampness of the place, were covered with rust.

The hopes of Anna were almost destroyed by the appearance of these massy fastenings; for she doubted greatly whether her strength was equal to the re-

moving of them. Setting her lamp upon the ground, with a trembling hand she essayed to move them.

For a long time they resisted her utmost efforts, and she began to lose all hope; when urged by despair, she again exerted herself, and after the greatest difficulty drew them back. She now took hold of the iron knob with both her hands, and pulled the heavy door open. A sudden gust of wind from the dark interior nearly extinguished her lamp, which she hastily covered, and waiting a few moments till the gale died away, she advanced her lamp and discovered a regular flight of steps. She quickly descended them, and came to others which were rough and ill shaped, and bore the appearance of having been hewn out of the solid rock. These she passed over with caution; and when arrived at the bottom, found a passage before her which was full of rubbish that had fallen from the decaying walls, which in some

places lay in large fragments on the ground, and which she was obliged to climb over.

At length, after much labour and difficulty her further progress was stopped by a door, before which was hung a massy chain; this she removed, the vaults still echoed with the melancholy clank, and the door slowly grated on its hinges. Anna now felt the cool breeze blow upon her, and beheld the pale regent of night slowly sinking beneath a dark cloud.

CHAP. XXX.

The morning at length arrived on which the marriage of the Lady Anna de Vortimer with Sir Orlando was to be solemnized. Orlando hailed its approach with delight; and a jocund smile sat upon his countenance, when he reflected that it was to put him in possession of the peerless Anna, and what weighed still heavier in the scale of his felicity, the extensive domains of Manstow.

Unable to rest, he rose early, and leaving the castle, proceeded on the extensive lawn; he now looked around him, while he thought to himself, "All that my eye surveys will in a few hours be mine."

"These proud towers will also soon

hail me as their lord," thought he, as he surveyed the frowning barbacans, whose embattled turrets hung far over their vast bases.

As he was gazing on the castle walls, his view was directed towards the casements of the apartments of the Lady Anna, a female form caught his attention. "There," thought he, "sits the beauteous Anna, trembling with anxious fears; her lovely cheeks suffused by maiden bashfulness. Soon shall I clasp her in my arms, and with fond endearments dispel her terrors; while with downcast eyes and averted face she will confess her love."

Thus vainly imagined Sir Orlando. He could not conceive it possible for any one to be insensible to the attractions of his person; and did not think at that moment of the streaming eyes, the pallid face, and trembling form of Anna, when, to gain a short respite from the agonizing horror of a marriage with him,

she faintly articulated a promise, extorted by the terrors of the moment, that she would marry him.

This occurred not to his recollection. The idea of force being necessary to effect a union with her, would have been spurned at with contempt, as a thing impossible; and he attributed her agitation to her virgin coyness, which maidens either feel, or else pretend to do.

Indulging these reveries, that for a while made his conscience slumber—for at that moment he thought not of Agnes, his hapless wife, immured in the cold bowels of the earth, in a melancholy chamber where the cheering light of day scarce paid his gladdening visit; where no sound of busy creation was heard, save the melancholy owl, or hoarse croaking raven, or the nightly gale that sighed amidst the waving grass in the confined court-yard, which instead of conveying pleasing emotions to the mind, to sooth the dreary hours of confine-

ment, served only to increase the solemn horror which kept its murky reign around the gloomy dungeons of Manstow.—These things occurred not to his mind, which was now full of his near-approaching marriage.

Edmund had long since been forgotten, or else he would have made his appearance at St. Clair; and De Vortimer often thought of making a public claim to those estates, but he feared that the prying eye of suspicion would then search too deeply into the mysterious events that had taken place at the chateau; and conscious guilt made him fearful of taking those steps.

A soldier on the highest tower of the castle attracted the notice of Sir Orlando. He was hoisting the banner which bore the arms of Sir Willoughby, and which now expanded to the breeze. He remarked how proudly it floated in the air. "Soon," said he, "shall that be removed, and mine will grace the

lofty walls of Manstow, and tell even to those distant hills who now is its happy possessor."

Thus ruminated Sir Orlando, while he slowly paced the lawn in front of the castle, ere the refulgent god of day had thrown his golden beams on its walls. Now, however, he illumined the summits, and soon after the grey walls were brightened by his rays, which at length fell on the form of Sir Orlando; who warned by them of the near approach of the nuptial hour, passed through the castle gates, scarce deigning to notice the homage of his guards, and proceeded to the grand hall.

Sir Orlando, who had many reasons for not wishing to make his intended marriage public, had confined the knowledge of it to Sir Hugh de Burleigh, a few other knights, and the domestics of the castle. He had given orders that the grand hall should be decorated for the occasion, and that the harpers and

troubadours should greet the morning with their merry notes.

A lively strain was played as he passed beneath the ample portico that, supported by eight immense columns, cast a gloomy shade over the wide folding portals of the hall.

De Burleigh and the other knights, richly habited in honour of the approaching ceremony, advanced to greet him on the joyful morn. Sir Orlando received their congratulations with conscious dignity and condescending smiles. He then entered an adjoining apartment, where his pages waited to array him in the costly garments he had selected for the occasion.

His surcoat was white, edged with a deep fringe of gold, and lined with crimson; an immense plume of white ostrich feathers crested his helmet; from his neck was suspended a chain of great worth, supporting the golden shield, which was his order of knighthood. A band

of gold chains, fastened together by clasps of the same rich metal, encircled his waist, from whence suspended his sword, the hilt of which was richly studded with jewels.

Thus superbly habited, Sir Orlando again came forth into the hall and listened to the blithe notes of the minstrels. The hour appointed for the ceremony was now proclaimed by the castle clock, and father Hildargo entered the hall. The eyes of the company were now anxiously directed towards the folding doors, expecting the entrance of the Lady Anna; for Sir Orlando had given orders to the centinel to let her come forth at the hour appointed for the nuptials. Some time elapsed, and she came not; when Sir Orlando, growing impatient, addressed himself to the monk.

"Holy father, I pray you to go to the Lady Anna's chamber, and conduct her here; it is like she may not chuse to

descend alone, and to meet the eyes of these my friends, without the countenance of her confessor."

"I will go this moment, Sir Orlando," replied the monk, "and conduct the blushing beauty hither." This saying, he left the hall, and proceeded towards the Lady Anna's apartment.

Having demanded of the centinel if the Lady Anna had yet passed forth; he was answered in the negative; he then entered the cedar chamber, where he found Editha dissolved in tears.

"What is thus afflicting you?" demanded the monk.

"Oh, holy father!" cried she, "I am lamenting after my dear mistress."

"Why, Editha," said the monk, "shouldst thou lament for the Lady Anna, who, in becoming the bride of Sir Orlando, securely establishes her happiness?"

Editha now looked at the monk. "You understand me not, holy father;

the Lady Anna has left this place two nights ago, and I am weeping lest any misfortune should assail her."

Hildargo at this was struck speechless. He gazed on Editha, while his countenance turned pale with rage. At length, he demanded, "Know you not whither she is gone? Tell me at once," he continued, raising his voice, "or tortures shall enforce the secret from you."

Editha, trembling with terror, dropped on her knees, and solemnly declared that she did not know, nor had the Lady Anna ever mentioned any place to her.

"Slowly the monk returned back to the hall, and approaching the impatient De Vortimer, who seemed surprised that he came alone. "Sir Orlando, I have words of a distressing import for your ear. The Lady Anna is fled."

"Fled! Where? How could she fly?" exclaimed De Vortimer, rushing out of the hall, and in an agony of rage and

disappointment, he entered her late apartments. Editha was still there, tremblingly awaiting the storm that would soon burst over her head. "Tell me, instantly," said the furious De Vortimer; "tell me where the Lady Anna is gone!"

Poor Editha again fell on her knees; "As I hope for mercy, my lord, I know not."

"When did she go?"

"Some time after you came into this apartment the other night, my lord."

"How did she get out?" again roared De Vortimer.

"She contrived to open the door that leads into the hall gallery," said Editha, "by means of an old key which she found."

"She must still be in the castle," said De Vortimer, "as the guard would not permit her to pass the gates." With this hope he quitted the apartment, and, attended by the monk, De Burleigh, and

the other knights, and his domestics, searched through every apartment of the castle, in a state of mind not easy to be conceived. She was however no where to be found. Fury and disappointment dwelt in his countenance. Recollecting he had not searched the chapel, he went there, and examined every part of it. Then taking torches, he entered the cemetery, and all the dungeons that he knew of, except that which was in the passage that led to where the Lady Agnes had passed so many melancholy hours.

As they were going along the cemetery, a coffin, the lid of which had been displaced, and which shewed the frail remnants of mortality within, met their view; and also the lamp, and they busied themselves in various conjectures how it could have come there, as the lamp bore a recent appearance. The monk was the only one who could have informed them; but he was silent from

shame at the fears that had caused him to leave it there.

Sir Orlando now proceeded to the passage that led to the armoury, and when they had entered it, the small door at the further end caught their notice.

Taking a torch from a domestic, Orlando commanded them to await his coming, as he did not wish that passage to be known to the inhabitants of the castle; and then, with the monk, and the knights, hastily proceeded down the long flight of stone-steps; and at length, coming to the end of the passage, he found the postern open; this then was the way she had left the castle, and had escaped his machinations. Still, however, he hoped to discover where she was, and for that purpose proceeded to the apartments where Editha was. "Tell me, vile beldame, to what place the Lady Anna is gone," said he, in a voice almost rendered indistinct by the furious emotions which disturbed him.

" My lord," said the trembling female, " Indeed, I know not, nor do I think my lady had fixed on any place ere she left the castle." Sir Orlando was silent for a moment, while his form shook with rage occasioned by the deep disappointment he had met. " Confine this woman," said he at length, to the centinel, " in one of the turret chambers."

Editha threw herself on her aged knees, while she protested her ignorance of the intentions of the Lady Anna, but to no purpose, and the centinel entering, Sir Orlando ordered him to drag her away. He then examined the key which was in the lock of the gallery-door, and which broke in the wards as he was endeavouring to pull it out; he thought it impossible that she could have gone unaccompanied; and descending to the grand hall, he assembled the domestics and retainers of the castle; none of them, however, were absent;

he then sent to see if her palfrey was in the meadows, and was informed, that and another horse were missing.

De Vortimer was thunder-struck at this information, and unable to conceive who could be with her, unless, indeed, it was the sable knight; but he quickly rejected that idea, for though he appeared to the Lady Anna, and the world, as suspecting her of an intimacy with him, yet he knew her too well, and was too conscious of her high notions of delicacy, and her strict adherence to truth, to wear that opinion himself; he used it because it well suited his purpose, and had given him a cloak for his violent conduct, in confining her to her apartments. He naturally supposed, that Editha was acquainted with every circumstance that had occurred; and he therefore still kept her confined, that she might not be able to acquaint the rest of the domestics with his conduct towards her mistress the Lady Anna.

Sir Orlando now considered to what place she could have gone. And at length, it forcibly occurred to him, that she must have bent her steps to her aunt, the Lady Gertrude de Percy. He instantly ordered his fleetest horses to be saddled, in hopes to come up with her, ere she could reach the castle de Percy, which was many leagues distant from Manstow.

De Burleigh offered to accompany him, and represented to De Vortimer, that it would be better they went alone, as they could proceed with greater expedition, while he could dispatch parties on the different roads.

De Vortimer following this plan, gave directions accordingly, and when the horses were brought into the court-yard, hastily mounted, and accompanied by De Burleigh, proceeded swiftly through the castle gates, and took the road that led to Percy castle.

Sir Orlando and De Burleigh had

thrown off their sumptuous habits, which they had worn in the morning, and had resumed their usual dress. De Vortimer's surcoat was a deep blue, with an embroidered edge, and a plume of black feathers on his helmet, and De Burleigh had on a grey surcoat, and a black plume of feathers in his casque.

They proceeded with great expedition, till the shades of evening closed around them. They then sought a shelter for a few hours to refresh themselves and their horses, but no cottage met their view, and they now entered a forest, where the thickness of the foliage entirely obscured the small remains of twilight, and all beneath was shrouded in murky darkness, while the shrill and hollow-toned blasts roared in the lofty tops of the pines.

They had not proceeded far in the intricate domain, where the ancient trees formed a close avenue, while their mouldering roots and trailing branches of the

brambles obstructed and delayed their passage, by entangling the feet of the horses, when the loud and hollow blast of a horn echoed through the forest, and a distant indistinct splashing, as of horses treading over marshy ground, was heard by Sir Orlando and De Burleigh, who suddenly turned aside their horses from the path they were in.

The sound now approached, and De Vortimer distinguished the voice of Sir William Gaveston, who our reader will recollect was paying his addresses to the Lady Emillia de Hertford. Some of the domestics who carried torches, were quickly advancing, and De Vortimer turned back into the path.

The torch-bearers seeing before them two strangers advancing, now halted, and Sir William Gaveston soon came up. What was the surprise of Sir Orlando to see him, accompanied by the Lady Emillia, and the old Baron De Hertford.

Sir William started back with some emotion, when he recognized the features of De Vortimer, for he had heard of his base treatment to the Lady Agnes, while Emillia, from a recollection of what had passed, of which she had amply repented, drew her veil over her face, and reined in her palfrey by the side of her father's steed.

Sir William, with a repelling coldness, saluted Sir Orlando, who instantly noticed it, for he had formerly been on terms of frienship with Sir Gaveston, and was passing on, when Sir William demanded after the Lady Agnes.

Orlando, confused at the sudden question, was some moments ere he replied, that she was dead. The red glare of the torches which flashed on the face of Sir Orlando, discovered his countenance pale and agitated.

"And was Edmund de St. Clair ever found?" said Sir William.

"No," replied De Vortimer, "it

was conjectured that he was also destroyed by the banditti."

" It was strange," returned Sir William, " that no traces of either were ever discovered."

Sir Orlando trembled; his whole frame was agitated by the contending emotions that warred within his guilty breast, while he returned for answer, " It was certainly strange!" and then, waving his hand, he abruptly departed, without noticing the Lady Emillia, or the Baron de Hertford.

Sir William then related the whole of what he knew concerning the circumstance of his having met the Lady Agnes in the forest of Guirche with the banditti, whom he considered as having been instigated in their proceedings by Sir Orlando, and also of her disappearance from the wood-cutter's cottage.

The baron then recounted to him the strange voices which he had heard at the chateau, and the mysterious person he

met in the forest, and also the dark proceedings which appeared in the loss of the papers and will of the Baron de St. Clair.

Sir William then determined at his first leisure, to lay the circumstances before the king, that he might cause inquiry to be made about the estates of Edmund de St. Clair, which remained unclaimed, and of which the titles had been so mysteriously secreted.

Sir William Gaveston had seen and admired the Lady Emillia, and had at length obtained her hand, and was now on his way from Bretagne to his estate in England.

Sir Orlando continued his journey in a situation of mind not easy to be described; he saw in the look and manner of Sir Gaveston, that he entertained suspicions of him, and he well knew how heavily his conduct to the Lady Agnes, should it ever be discovered, would weigh against him; trusting,

however, in the seeming impossibility of that circumstance he endeavoured to regain his spirits.

Having travelled for some hours, they issued at length from the forest; the morning twilight now faintly gleamed around, and shewed before them an uncultivated tract of country, while the blue mists, not yet chased away by the beams of the sun, prevented them from distinguishing any distant object.

CHAP. XXXI.

The Lady Anna de Vortimer, as our readers will find in the first chapter of this history, was resting her weary frame in a cottage, attended by Hubert; the female inhabitant of which, had so greatly excited her attention. She was tall, elegantly formed, and had a foreign appearance.

Anna wished much to know how it was that she, seemingly so superior in manners and education to the peasantry around, should live in so solitary a way, for there appeared to be no other resident in the cottage.

In a gentle manner she questioned her kind hostess; who replied, with a sigh,

that she had long been resident beneath that humble roof; and that when first she came to it, she was accompanied by a dear and tender parent, whose remains lay in the village burial-ground, as did also the peasant and his wife, to whom the cottage then belonged. "They are all gone!" said she, sighing deeply, "and I cannot bring myself to leave the spot which contains my beloved mother. I have therefore lived here, excluded from the world, and indulge in solitude the sorrows of my breast."

Anna's heart sympathized with the grief of the interesting cottager, and after some hesitation, requested to know what cause had made her retire from the world, which she seemed formed to grace.

"Alas!" replied she, "I have seen but little of the world, and that has been so dreadful, that nothing would induce me to enter it again. My name is Rosalia de Gondoni. I am an Italian by birth, but drove, with my mother, out

of my native country by the most horrible plot that human nature can form an idea of." Here she related to the Lady Anna, that tale which the reader will recollect in the narrative of Pierro, with the information she had received from the Lady Agnes.

Anna shed tears at the recital of the horrible acts of Molini.

" Those particulars," said Rosalia, " a lady who stopped here some time back, accompanied by a monk, informed me of; and said she had sufficient evidence by her to clear the name of Gondoni from the cruel odium which rested on it. But that lady I have never since seen; she appeared to me to be very unhappy, and I believe would have embosomed her griefs to me, but the monk, who was called Hildargo, would not allow her to partake of my bed."

Anna started at that name, and listended with some agitation to the remainder of Rosalia's discourse.

They sat off in a car before day-break, and as I overhead, from some conversation that passed between the monk and the peasant who drove the mules, they expected to be that night at Manstow castle.

" At Manstow castle!" exclaimed Anna, " Good Heavens! How long is that ago?" " It must be near three years, I think," replied Rosalia, " though perhaps not so long; but the time passes heavily with me.—But you seem astonished," said she. " Do you know any thing of the lady?"

Anna answered not. She was deeply involved in thought. " And did you know the name?"

" No," replied Rosalia; " yet I think the monk did once call her Agnes."

Anna now reflected on the night of her escape from the castle, when she saw the monk in the chapel with a basket and a lamp. " There is," thought she, " some mysterious circumstance which

remains to be developed. Who can this Agnes be? and for what view could the monk have in bringing a lady to Manstow, and to keep her concealed? Time, however, will possibly develope this." She now addressed herself to Rosalia: "It is not improbable that I may see or hear of this Agnes, you mention; if so, I will endeavour to bring to her recollection her promise to you. Good Hubert," said she, turning round to the old man, "I fear we may not stay longer than till the horses are ready." Hubert bowed, and left the cottage.

Anna passed the time in converse with Rosalia, until Hubert made his appearance; when she bid her adieu; and mounting her palfrey, again pursued her journey.

Attended by Hubert, she now passed over a long extent of uncultivated heaths, anxiously looking at the distant hills on which the radiance of the setting-sun rested, and discovered them to be com-

posed of large rocky masses full of deep clefts, where his rays descended not; thin solitary groves of different trees grew in various directions, and a few peasants' cottages were scattered about, embosomed in their green shades.

Their road now wound round the base of a rough steep, and then they advanced into a deep glen.

The sun had now descended behind the western hills, and the rising wind began to chill the fragile form of the Lady Anna, who shrunk from its rude encounter, as it rushed in loud murmurs through the clefts and over the rugged summits of the rocks, while the black clouds, borne on the wings of the south wind, soon closed up the light of day, that had as yet glowed from the western clouds, that retained the crimson beams of the refulgent luminary.

A few heavy drops of rain caused Anna, who had been ruminating on the

tale of the interesting Rosalia de Gondoni, to look around her, but the dusky hue of the approaching night, which threw its gloomy shades around, prevented her from seeing any thing but a few paces before her.

Hubert now rode up. "Lady," said he, "the night draws in fast, and the nocturnal vapours will ill agree with you. Permit me then, to ride on, that I may seek a cottage, should there happily be one among these desert wilds."

"Thou mayest do so; but I fear, good Hubert," replied Anna, "there is little chance of your succeeding; and I lament that I did not turn aside to one of the villages that met my eye, ere I began to toil amongst these rude mountains."

Hubert now passed by the Lady Anna, and proceeded along the rugged road as fast as he was able; for his aged limbs ill endured the fatigues he had already undergone, and but for his desire

of serving his lady, he would gladly have laid down beneath the cover of an impending cliff. He endeavoured, however, to shake off the fatigue that hung heavy upon him, and with a careful eye surveyed the place he was passing through to seek a habitation.

He often stopped his steed to listen if the barking of watch-dogs should meet his ear; but save the howling blast, and pattering of the rain on the bushes, all was silent. His anxiety concerning his mistress whom he had left behind, and his solicitude to find a cover for her from the storm, made him use exertions beyond his strength; but the farther he proceeded, the more wild and desolate grew the road.

Hubert now with a deep sigh turned about to bring the unwelcome tidings of his ill success to the Lady Anna. The cold wind shivered his aged form; the rain beat hard on his garments, now drenched and clinging to his body; his

trembling limbs refused to aid his wishes, the reins dropped out of his palsied hands, and Hubert fell insensible on the ground.

The Lady Anna continued riding on, listening to the decreasing sound of the feet of Hubert's steed; and when she could no longer hear them, a sudden terror, at being thus left alone in a tempestuous night on an unknown road, pervaded her mind. Comforting herself, however, with the expectation of soon resting herself before a warm hearth, she endeavoured to keep up her spirits, listening during the intervals of the moaning blast, for the return of Hubert. She was obliged to proceed with caution; for now she could scarce discern the road before her. Unused to feel the boisterous wind or the driving shower, she was scarcely able to support herself on her palfrey.

"Good Heavens!" said she at last, "what can have become of Hubert?

Sure some accident has happened him, or he would not have left me thus long in such a terrible night as this." She now stopped her palfrey, that his paces might not prevent her from catching the first sounds of Hubert's steed. But, alas! no such welcome notice of his approach met her ear. She now became alarmed; her heart beat quick against her side, and she again set forward, starting at the rustling of the bushes when agitated by the sudden blast, lest it should be some midnight robber or assassin.

Near two hours had elapsed, and Hubert returned not. Anna's anxiety and distress now grew almost insupportable. With an agitated voice she called on his name. The faint echo repeated the tremulous sounds, but no voice met her ear.

Again she called out; but a blast of wind wafted far away the words she uttered. No longer able to endure her anxiety, tears started from her eyes;

when as she gazed around on the gloomy void, something standing before her in the road, made her stop, and she recognized the steed of Hubert without his rider. Terrified at this, she felt unable to proceed; for she began to fear that her old servant had been murdered by some remorseless banditti.

The steed, pleased with seeing his companion, neighed aloud, and soon after a low groan struck on the affrighted ear of the Lady Anna. Another groan now caused her to look at the spot from whence the melancholy sounds proceeded. Something caught her view; and when she approached to it, perceived it was the faithful Hubert, extended on the wet earth.

She hastily quitted her palfrey, and, scarcely able to stand, with difficulty approached the spot. The groans she had heard convinced her that Hubert still lived, and humanity made her wish to be of service to him; she took his wet

hand, and found that there was a faint pulsation, and she endeavoured to raise his head.

Hubert had began to revive, and at length became sensible of the condescending attention of the Lady Anna. This in a great measure quickened his recovery; and when he was able, in a faltering voice he prayed the Saints to bless his beloved mistress.

"Try, my good Hubert," said Anna, "if you have strength to arise with my assistance; a few paces forward is a large tree, under its spreading boughs we may find some shelter from this tempestuous night."

Hubert after some difficulty slowly arose from the ground. "Oh, lady," said he, "Heaven grant me a length of years to repay your kindness, is your poor Hubert's prayer."

Hubert at length got to the spreading tree, and sat himself down on its projecting roots. He then related to Anna,

who stood by him, his efforts to find a cottage. "Alas! my lady, you can form but little idea what my sensations were when I found myself unable to proceed to you, and felt myself falling from the horse. Your hapless situation was the last thought that occupied my mind. I hope I shall soon be able to sit on my horse again; for it grieves me to my heart to see you, lady, so wet and comfortless, who are so little used to bear the chilling blast."

"Do not fret yourself, Hubert," said the Lady Anna; "a little patience, and with Heaven's kind help, we shall soon proceed again; for see, the rain has now ceased, and it has become something clearer this last half hour. Cheer up, Hubert; as soon as it is sufficiently light, I will ride on, and shall soon, I trust, procure you assistance." Hubert poured forth his grateful thanks.

And now the ruddy dawn began to break through the gloomy fogs that soon

only hung over the valleys; and Anna was going to mount her palfrey, to procure assistance for Hubert, who was unable to move, when the sound of horses' feet rapidly approaching, was distinctly heard.

Anna grew pale, and ran, as if for safety, to the agitated Hubert, while she gazed on the place from whence the sounds proceeded, and saw two figures advancing through the haze. Hubert now with some satisfaction observed, that it could not be any one in pursuit of her as they were coming in another direction.

This in some degree quieted the fears of Anna, who gazed earnestly on the horsemen; when what was her distress, at recognizing in one, the Knight of the Black Cloud, and in the other his shield-bearer.

The appearance of the strange knight instantly brought to her mind the distress she had suffered on his account; and she knew, that should she meet his

eye, she should again incur the censure of the world, who would not impute the meeting to chance.

But then, the situation of Hubert, who was evidently getting worse, made her at length reconciled to what she was not able to avoid; for the knight, seeing the form of a lady standing by an old man who was lying at the foot of a tree, spurred on his steed, and swiftly approached.

In an instant he left his horse, and with a low obeisance said, "Fair lady, you appear in need of some assistance; I pray you, to command my willing services."

"Sir Knight," faltered the Lady Anna, "my faithful servant, unable to proceed with me, lies arrested by the hand of sickness; and I will esteem it a great kindness, if you permit your attendant to go to the nearest village to procure him assistance."

"You do me much honour, lady, in

making me of service; but the distance between this and the nearest cottage, is long. Permit me, then, to recommend that he sits on my attendant's horse, who will support him to the village. This, lady, will save much time; and you, fair lady, will sooner get the assistance you appear so greatly to need."

"Sir Knight," returned Anna, "I can ill express my thanks for your attentions; but I beg I may not stop your intended journey."

"Fair lady, I should ill deserve the name you honour me with, if I did not see you safe beneath the roof of a friendly host, where I passed the night; and who, I am sure, will be most attentive to you."

Anna seeing there was no preventing his accompanying her, now approached her palfrey; and when she had mounted it, received the reins from the sable knight, who kept his visor down, as did also his companion. Again she tried to

prevent his accompanying her, fearful of the malignant tongue of scandal. "Sir Knight, I pray you not to proceed with me; it will surely be a hindrance to your intended journey."

"Alas! lady," said the sable knight, with a deep sigh, "I had no prospect in this day's excursion, but to drive away obtruding sorrows from my heart. Permit me then, lady, to enjoy the pleasure which I shall derive from my poor attention to yourself and your attendant."

Anna now found it impossible to do or say more; and perceiving that the sable knight's companion had, during their converse, raised up Hubert on his steed, and was ready to depart; she advanced, and the knight, taking hold of the reins of Hubert's horse, followed the Lady Anna.

The bright beams of the morning sun now shone on the weary forms of the benighted travellers; its gladdening heat raised their drooping spirits, and Anna,

with some emotions of wonder, surveyed the country around, which was formed of innumerable rocks and hills; some rising gradually, covered with the verdant carpet of nature, while others reared aloft their abrupt summits, bare of vegetation and full of rough craggs; beneath them were deep chasms and dark glens, the sides covered with bunches of the glossy spleenwort; while here and there a solitary pine raised its head. At a distance the beams of the sun glittered on a cataract, that rushed down a steep precipice into a valley where the eye could not reach.

Anna, as she gazed around her, continually found out new beauties in this romantic part of the country. But her heart was ill at ease; for she well knew, that the circumstance of the sable knight, should it ever be known that she had seen him, would be received as a full conviction of the base fabrications of Sir Orlando.

One thing, however, gave her some comfort; and this was, that he seemed not to know her. Indeed, the difference of her appearance at the tournament, when she was arrayed in a sumptuous dress, to her garments wet and dirty, and the plume of feathers which she wore in her hat, hanging down over her face, clogged with the rain, might easily account for his not recognizing her.

He seemed to be tormented with some secret grief, by the deep sighs which once or twice he uttered, and the melancholy air with which he at times drooped his head; and then, as if by a sudden effort, he would raise it, and pointing out some romantic view, discourse on it in animated terms till his voice would die away, and, as if a painful thought had obtruded itself on his mind, he would appear to relapse into some sad rumination.

When they had thus proceeded some

time, "Lady," said the knight, "look to the west, and you will behold a few peasants' huts in a little valley: it is there I wish to lead you. How tranquil is that scene! Those huts seem to repose in the bosoms of their little gardens. Their peaceful inhabitants pursue their toiling lives in happy obscurity: no warring, no tempestuous passions disturb them. They seek not, by acts of savage barbarity, to aggrandize themselves at the expence of the lives and comforts of others. Murder and rapine are there unknown. The mother rears her offspring in peace, which in a few years becomes her comfort and support; and the peasant smiles to behold the infant hanging at the mother's breast, which increases his affection for her.—Happy state, how blessed!"

Here the sable knight stopped. He sighed deeply; and Anna perceived, that the anguish which rested on his

heart was of a serious nature, and seemed to have taken fast root there.

"Sir Knight," said she in a soft voice, "by your discourse I fear your mind partakes not of the repose and tranquillity you paint."

"It is indeed, true, lady," returned the sable knight. "There is, alas! a cause; a mysterious circumstance which has long dwelt with agonizing sensations on my mind, and I fear will baffle the hand of time itself to erase!"

Anna respected his sorrows, and forbore further questions. She pensively indulged her own sad thoughts; and the knight, whose grief seemed to have been rouzed afresh, sighed deeply, and silently continued the journey.

They now turned into a narrow path, on one side of which a large rock reared its threatening brow, and nearly hung over it; on the other side was a declivity which stretched far down into a valley.

Anna trembled as she looked up, and saw the bushes on the brow of the cliff, rudely shaken by the wind, and expected every moment that the ponderous mass would fall, and end her weary pilgrimage in this world of woe.

CHAP. XXXII.

At length the Lady Anna, coming to the extremity of the path, entered a small valley where several huts met her view. They stopped at the first, which was surrounded by a neat paling that inclosed a small garden, where the woodbine, the spreading jessamine, and the auricula, with the blushing rose and gaudy tulip, formed an interesting display of the beauties of nature, and spread their delicious fragrance around.

The sable knight alighted, and respectfully assisted the Lady Anna to dismount; he then entered the cottage, and spoke to the wife of the peasant who inhabited it. She instantly came out and attended on the Lady Anna,

who leaning on her arm, entered the neat edifice.

In the room Anna beheld the sable knight, who bowed to her as she came in; and Anna, who conceived that he would immediately depart, expressed her gratitude to him for his services, and passed on with the peasant's wife Margueretta; who conducted her up a small flight of stairs to a chamber, where neatness and cleanliness seemed to reside. The casement was open, and the tender branches of the jessamine entered the room, and the delicate odour of its flowers was diffused around it.

Anna, greatly fatigued, was assisted by Margueretta to undress, and she then laid down on the clean pallet, and her harassed frame was soon lulled to a soft repose; Margueretta taking her clothes to clean and dry them, gently went out of the chamber, and left the poor suffering Anna to her gentle slumbers.

Hubert was with difficulty lifted from the horse, and assisted by the attendant of the sable knight, was placed before the hearth; the warmth of which, and a cordial which the peasant gave him, soon contributed to restore the powers of speech: but his limbs, chilled by the cutting gale of the night, were still useless, and he was carried to a bed to repose his exhausted frame.

The Lady Anna awoke, refreshed by her slumbers, and her thoughts were immediately bent on Hubert; desirous to know how he was, she tapped on the floor, and Margueretta soon ascended the stairs, bringing with her the Lady Anna's garments.

"How is my attendant?" anxiously enquired Anna.

"The poor old man," said Margueretta, "is something recovered, but still unable to use his limbs."

"Poor Hubert!" sighed Anna; "how

much he has suffered for me!" She now arose from her couch, and, attended by Margueretta, soon attired herself.

Her beautiful hair, which before was wet and disordered by the rude winds, now curled over her polished forehead, while the long ringlets were plaited, and confined by strings of pearls; the slumbers she had taken had given a glow to her cheeks, which before were pale and agitated. Thus like a fabled goddess, beaming health, beauty, and innocence, she descended into the apartment below, when the first person she saw was the sable knight, sitting pensively by the casement. He had removed his visor, and Anna for the first time beheld his features.

When the knight saw her entering the apartment, he started up; while a slight confusion appeared on his cheeks, that were tinged with the glow of health. He accosted her with an embarrassed air; and Anna, who little thought to

behold him again, blushed at the unexpected sight.

" Surely, lady," said he, after a pause, " I have had the happiness of seeing you before; though the difference of your situation then, to what I now behold you in, might make me think it otherwise."

Anna blushed, but replied not; and the knight continued. " Sure it is, I do behold the Lady Anna de Vortimer!"

Anna sighed. " You do, indeed, Sir Knight; and you, if I mistake not, are the knight who appeared at the tournament of Manstow."

The knight sighed deeply. " I was, lady, and fear my success that day will not do me much favour in your eyes."

The thoughts of Anna now wandered to the suspicions that had been entertained of her conduct with the knight, and the distress it had occasioned her; but she reflected that the knight was in-

nocent, and she feeling at that moment resentment against De Vortimer, said, "Your success, Sir Knight, I must own, did not displease me, for I thought Sir Orlando de Vortimer was rather uncourteous in his conduct to you."

When she mentioned his name, the countenance of the knight, which before was calm, now assumed a terrible aspect, his brows descended, and his whole frame seemed agitated. He arose from his seat, and paced the chamber; at last he seemed to recollect himself, and in a voice rather deeper than his accustomed tone, he said, "Sir Orlando, indeed well deserved the overthrow he met; but I intreat your pardon, fair lady; my mind is, at times, discomposed; I am unhappy.—"

After a few moments his countenance gradually resumed its serenity. "Lady," said he, "the situation I found you in, will, perhaps, be my excuse for a question I am going to ask you. A lady of

your rank, travelling with only one attendant, benighted in a desolate road, and the agitation you appeared to endure, are extraordinary circumstances; tell me then, lady, if your situation is such as to need assistance?"

The confusion of Anna greatly increased during this speech; she hung her lovely head, and knew not what answer to make. At length, she thought it of no import to conceal what would so soon be publicly known.

"Alas! Sir Knight," she at length replied, deeply blushing, "I am now flying from the persecutions of Sir Orlando."

"Of Sir Orlando!" replied the sable knight, starting up; "He persecute you! What then, does he still go on in his diabolical acts? O God! it is too much. Was it not enough that—" here he stopped his discourse, and folding his arms, knit his brows, and remained for a while motionless, gazing on the ground.

At length, he lifted up his eyes, and fixed them on the Lady Anna; "And he would persecute thee too! The measures of his crimes are not yet filled up. Fear not, lady; behold in me an avenger of the oppressed, as long as my arm can wield a sword. De Vortimer has implanted thorns in my bosom, whose roots entwine round my heart; nor, while I live, can they be irradicated. —Rely, then, lady, on the faith and honour of a knight; tell me, I pray you, how I can be serviceable to you?"

Anna had at times gazed on the sable knight; she saw the anguish he endured, and she was lost in wonder and astonishment at what could occasion it. That it was some most horrible deed, was evident by the agitation, the remembrance of it caused the knight.

She now replied, "I thank you greatly for your good intentions, but my destination is the castle de Percy, which is not more than a day's journey from this,

and I was hastening there when you met me."

" By your travelling at night, lady," said the sable night, your business is urgent. Do you fear pursuit?"

Anna disguised not the truth; adding, that she should set out the instant Hubert was able.

" But, Hubert, lady, I fear, will be some days ere he can recover, which surely will greatly endanger you. It is probable Sir Orlando may be advancing, in the hopes of overtaking you, ere you get to the castle of the Lady de Percy. Let me then advise you, lady, not to wait for the recovery of your domestic, but to accept of my protection, and the attendance of my faithful servant."

Anna paused; she saw the necessity of her setting out without further loss of time; she saw the great danger of delay; her fear painted to her the savage Orlando, with his adherents, dragging her back to the castle of Manstow,

where Hildargo was ready to unite them. She saw too, the sable knight dying in her defence; but then she likewise saw the impropriety in accepting of the offers of a stranger. She felt convinced of his honour, and the situation she was in, was to herself a sufficient excuse, but would the world acquit her so easily. Yet what was to be done—the moments were precious. It was not possible for her to travel by herself, both on account of the danger, and her ignorance of the road; and there was the greatest necessity for her setting out immediately.

The knight saw the situation of her thoughts, and again pressed her to consent; and at length, with much hesitation, she accepted of his services. She partook of some provisions, and the knight putting on his helmet, went out to order the steeds to be made ready for the journey; his attendant soon equipped them, and the sable knight entering the cottage, told the Lady

Anna that every thing was in readiness. Anna, however, could not depart without seeing Hubert, to whom she imparted her intention of accepting the services of the sable knight, bidding him, when he was sufficiently recovered, to meet her at the castle de Percy. She then recommended him to the attentive care of Margueretta, and with a deep sigh, put on her hat and veil, and mounted her palfrey.

Emerging from the vale, they now wound up an immense chain of hills; Anna often looked back with some apprehension on the country which she had passed, expecting to see the gloomy form of Sir Orlando and his associates, in pursuit of her. When, at length, they had arrived on the highest hill, the sable knight pointed out to her a black mass, which was situated on the top of a distant mountain.

"Yonder, lady," said he, "is the castle de Percy, if I have been rightly informed; but I am almost fearful we

shall not arrive there to night, as the day is now far spent."

" I hope, Sir Knight," said the Lady Anna, " that we shall, for I cannot arrive there too soon, my anxiety every moment increases."

" Lady, my endeavours shall not be wanting," replied the sable knight, " but the distance is great."

Anna increased the speed of her palfrey, and they now descended quickly the hills, and proceeded over a large uncultivated tract of country, where scarce a single tree appeared to vary the scene.

The evening now fast approached, and Anna, from time to time, kept her eye on the indistinct mass of building which the sable knight had informed her was Percy castle, till it was lost in a thick mist.

She often was on the point of attempting to satisfy her curiosity concerning who the knight was, and the motives of

his conduct at Manstow; but as often as she was going to give utterance to the question, delicacy prevented her; and at last she gave up the thought. Frequently during the day, the knight had relapsed into his gloomy reveries, during which he would ride by the side of Anna, seemingly unconscious of the presence of his fair companion, while a sigh now and then would escape his breast.

It was now almost dark, when as they were passing through a narrow glen, where the surrounding rocks obscured the small remains of light; a party of men rushed from the cover of a projecting rock, and furiously attacked the knight.

Anna instantly drew back, uttering a scream of affright, as she beheld the knight unsheath his shining glave, and dart in the midst of them, his companion instantly following him.—A loud

and horrible noise of the clashing of swords, and of furious voices was heard for some time.

The trembling Anna did not dare to lift up her eyes, and even had she done so, the darkness of the night would have prevented her from knowing the real state of the combat.—At length, a silence ensued ; Anna then ventured to look up, when she beheld the sable knight hastily approaching her; " Lady," said he, " you are safe; the banditti are fled."

Anna now began to revive from the stupor of despair and dread, which had began to pervade her senses ; but hearing the last words of the knight, she was fearful to proceed, lest she should view some horrid mangled form ; and while she was busied in the reflections, a deep groan smote on her ear.

The knight instantly left her, and as she advanced her palfrey, she saw him supporting a man, who expressed the

anguish he felt by those melancholy sounds. The knight was perplexed what to do as the gloom increased so fast, that he feared lest he should lose his way amidst the trackless wilds they had yet to pass; and humanity forbade him to leave the wounded wretch without assistance; hastily his attendant tied a bandage over his wound, and placed him in the small cave where the banditti had concealed themselves from the observation of the travellers; and the knight then told him, that he would soon pass that way again; when on his making a determination of altering his horrid course of life, they would conduct him to a habitation.

The robber faintly expressed his thanks, and the knight now mounting his steed, requested the Lady Anna to proceed. She instantly complied; and as she passed over the spot where the engagement had been, something bright met her eyes; she stooped

to see what it was, but turned away with horror when she saw it was a sword lying beside a motionless body. Her palfrey started at the sudden glare of the steel, and with the agitation of her mind, which made her neglectful of her seat, would have thrown her, if the knight, who saw her danger, had not instantly seized the reins, and prevented the accident that must else have happened.

The Lady Anna expressed her acknowledgments to the knight for his attention, and hastened away from the lifeless form that had so greatly alarmed her. She could not help reflecting with horror, on what her situation would have been, if she had had only Hubert with her when attacked by the banditti; and she looked up to Heaven with gratitude and thankfulness.

Neither the knight or his attendant had fortunately received any hurt in the fierce encounter; and they left the

gloomy glen, the scene of so much horror and affright to her, and entered the open country, but she gazed in vain for the lofty turrets of Percy castle. The knight who saw her looking forwards, conceived what was passing in her thoughts. "We shall soon arrive at the castle, lady," said he, "the road we are now in leads directly to it."

They now began to ascend, when the path winding round the base of a steep ridge, discovered, at length, though half concealed by the frowning mountain, the embattled turrets of an immense castle. The darkness of the night veiled the greatest part of the building; and from the height and breadth of the towers that broke on the view, the imagination was left to form an idea of the extensive structure. The solitary edifice thus remotely situated, seemed to frown over the surrounding mountains with majestic grandeur.

They now slowly rode up the steep

path that led to the gates of the castle, on each side of which, the round towers of the barbacan, with their embattled turrets, seemed to forbid all hostile attempts to approach the gates, which were closed.

The sable knight rode on, and loudly blew the horn which hung by the side of the gates. The sounds, wafted by the wind, hung long amidst the surrounding hills, till, at length, they died away in indistinct murmurs.

A voice from one of the towers, demanded their business; when the knight, by desire of the Lady Anna, replied,

"Let the Lady de Percy know that the Lady Anna de Vortimer awaits admittance at her castle gates."

A silence now ensued, which was at length broken by the clanking of heavy chains on the inside of the portals, and the noise occasioned by the drawing out of the walls the ponderous bolts. The gates now slowly creaking on their

hinges, discovered some domestics with torches, who conducted the travellers in into a court.

The sable knight addressing himself to Anna, said, " Here, lady, I may congratulate you on your being safe from the base plans of Sir Orlando, and I pray the Saints to watch and protect you."

" Sir Knight," said the Lady Anna, " you surely will permit me to request a lodging for the night for yourself and attendant from the Lady de Percy, who doubtless, will think it strange, when I inform her of the great obligation I am under to you, that you would not partake of the shelter of her hospitable roof."

" Fair lady," said the sable knight, " what I have done, was my duty, and therefore not intitled to commendation. I may not stay longer," said he, " with a deep sigh," and making a low obeisance, he departed with his attendant.

Anna greatly surprised at his mysterious conduct, beheld him pass through the gates, while the light of the torches gleamed on his armour, and discovered the sable plumes of his helmet waving in the breeze; and when the gloom no longer permitted her to view him, a sigh escaped her, and pensively she turned round, and assisted by the domestics of the Lady Gertrude de Percy, she alighted from her palfrey, and preceded by a torch-bearer, she crossed the spacious court-yard, and entered the lofty hall, where the glare of the torch flashed on the immense columns, and discovered the heavy trophies that adorned them. The military banners that had been gained in the contested field, waved with the breeze, which was admitted by the opened portals, and the armour reflected the glare of the torch.

Anna now passed through this exten-

sive hall, and was ushered into a chamber, where she had not waited long, when a folding portal was thrown open, and she found herself in the embrace of the Lady Gertrude de Percy.

CHAP. XXXIII.

The Lady Gertrude de Percy received with the greatest affection the Lady Anna de Vortimer. "And yet," said she, "I take it rather unkind of you, my dearest Anna, that you gave me no intimation of this pleasure, that I might have provided suitable accommodations for you.—See," replied she, to an attendant, "that the Lady De Vortimer's domestics are properly attended to."

An indescribable emotion now disturbed the Lady Anna, while she said, "Lady Gertrude, I have no domestics with me; the only one I had, I was obliged to leave at a cottage, being unwell."

Lady Gertrude now observed with some surprise, "That she was informed

there were three or four attendants with her at the castle gates."

Anna blushed, and replied, " that it was a knight and his attendant, who had conducted her to the castle; but to-morrow, my dear aunt, I will relate to you all the events since my dear father's death. To-night I am too much agitated and fatigued to do it."

They soon after separated for the night, and Anna retired to a magnificent chamber that had been prepared for her.

The furniture of the lofty tester that hung over the couch, was blue satin, embroidered with gold; the walls were covered with tapestry, and the tables and chairs were richly gilt. Adjoining the bed-chamber was a closet, in which was a small altar, with a crucifix on it, and at the feet, a missal, the pages of which were beautifully illuminated.

Anna devoutly threw herself on her knees, and poured forth the prayer of

gratitude to her Guardian Saints, for having preserved her in so wonderful a manner from the power of Sir Orlando. She also thought, while a faint blush overspread her cheek, of the sable knight; and she wished that he might soon be eased from the misery which seemed so greatly to oppress him.

She now retired to rest. But the thoughts of the tale she had to relate to her aunt, the Lady Gertrude, and the uncertainty how it would be received, for a while deprived her of rest; for she feared her aunt might be as much prejudiced as the world were by appearances. Trusting, however, in the prevalence of truth, she at last composed the agitation of her mind, and slept till the orient beams of the sun shone through the casement on the curtain of her couch.

Hastily she arose, and opening the door of the closet, she kneeled before the altar and offered up her orisons.

This done, she felt that calm and exalted comfort which arises from pious devotions.

She advanced to the casement of her bed-chamber, and was struck with awe and admiration by the grand and gloomy prospect it commanded. On one side a mass of mountains appeared heaped on each other in tumultuous disorder, whose towering summits seemed to rest on the clouds, that hanging round their bases, prevented them from being seen.

On the other, rolled far beyond the view the boundless ocean; and beneath the casement was a broad rampart, which hung over the beach below. She looked for a while on the green waters, and trembled as she beheld the adventurous skiff, which reeling to the gale, swiftly stemmed the rising waves.

She now descended from her apartment, and was affectionately received by her aunt. After they had finished their morning repast, and the attendants had

retired, Anna in a tremulous voice began the promised recital. She mentioned every circumstance relative to the conduct of the sable knight at the tournament; then the unfortunate incident respecting the knight's pennon, and the various suspicions which it raised against her.

She then informed her aunt of the conduct of Sir Orlando towards her; of his confining her to her chamber; of attempting to force her to a marriage; of her escape from the castle of Manstow; and lastly, of her meeting with the mysterious knight in her distressed situation; of his attention to her, and valorous conduct in overcoming the banditti; and of his having left her when he saw her safe in Percy castle.

The Lady Gertrude was excessively affected with the simple narrative of Anna. She started with horror at the base designs of Sir Orlando, and wept at the melancholy situation of the Lady

Anna, when poor Hubert had fallen senseless from his horse; and she smiled at her relation of his conduct towards the banditti. Taking her fondly in her arms, she said, "I do, indeed, my beloved Anna, firmly believe every syllable thou hast uttered; and even before thou didst commence thy tale, my heart acquitted thee of intentional offence. Praised be the Saints, my love, that thou art safe from the vile plots of Sir Orlando, whom I have ever looked on in his real light. Welcome to Percy castle, my Anna; and should Sir Orlando persist in exercising his power over thee as guardian, I will apply to the king; who owes too much to the De Percy's to neglect their request, and he will soon transfer the guardianship of thee and thy estates to some person more capable of holding that important office."

Anna was delighted beyond measure at this kindness of the Lady Gertrude, and expressed her most grateful sense of

her goodness. The relation of the Lady Anna had taken up a great part of the morning; and the Lady Gertrude, as was her constant custom, now retired to her chapel, saying to Anna, "You, my dear Anna, may, if you like, come with me; if not, you will find some amusement in looking over the castle, and I will order the warden to attend you."

Anna, however, preferred the duties of religion to satisfying her curiosity; and she attended the Lady Gertrude to the chapel, and again returned thanks for the asylum she had gained from the persecutions of the savage and designing Sir Orlando.

When their religious exercises were over, they separated, and Anna proceeded with a light heart to her apartments. After she had again amused herself with the bold scenery that appeared from her chamber, she entered the closet, and opened the casement there which looked to that part of the

country over which she had travelled, when her attention was caught by two horsemen, who seemed to be hastening towards the castle. At first she felt a soft confusion tinge her cheek; for she thought it was the sable knight who was coming to the castle: but on a nearer approach, she discovered their surcoats were different from those worn by the sable knight and his attendant.

While she busied herself in conjectures who they could be, the winding of the road hid them from her sight, and she had almost forgotten the circumstance when the sound of the horn informed her they had reached the castle gates.

At first she thought it might be Sir Orlando; but then she conceived that he would hardly, after his conduct to her, enter the castle of the Lady Gertrude, with whom he well knew he was no favourite.

The castle bell now reminded her of

the hour of repast, and she descended to the apartments of the Lady Gertrude, on whose brow sat an indignant frown.

Anna instantly observed it; and the Lady de Percy, addressing herself to her, said, "I have had a visit this morning from Sir Orlando, who seemed so little to know the respect due to me, that I abruptly quitted the chamber where I had attended to his conversation, which was full of base fabrications of your conduct with the sable knight."

"I thank you, my dear aunt," said Anna, "for this fresh proof you have given me of your valuable friendship."

"You may always depend on me, my dear Anna," replied the Lady Gertrude. "I must indeed own it has flurried me a little. He had even the insolence to demand you from my hands. To this I made no answer, but retired; leaving him to make his reflections on my conduct, which he understood in

the way I wished, for he shortly after left the castle."

Anna felt relieved from a considerable portion of anxiety when she heard that he was gone, and sought to calm the perturbations which his conduct had occasioned in the mind of the Lady de Percy, and at length, though not without some difficulty succeeded; for the pride of the Lady Gertrude was hurt by his insulting comportment towards her.

At length Anna retired to her chamber; and now, free from all her fears, she enjoyed the comforts of uninterrupted repose.

She arose early in the morning, and descending from her chamber, endeavoured to find out the way that led to the rampart which seemed to hang over the sea. As she was crossing the hall she met the warden, who bowed and was passing on, when she said, "I pray you, good warden, direct me to the

eastern rampart; as I wish to enjoy the fresh breeze from the sea on that place."

"Certainly, lady," replied the man; "I will this instant attend you there." So saying he left the hall, and Anna following him, he crossed the court-yard, and entered a portal which opened into a long passage. At the extremity of this place a small bridge was thrown over a deep cliff in the rock; and when Anna had crossed it, she found herself on the rampart; she then dismissed the warden, and continued her walk inhaling the fresh breeze from the briny ocean.

She now advanced to the parapet wall, and was looking over it on the beach below, when her attention was caught by the appearance of two knights who were walking on it, apparently deeply engaged in conversation; and she soon recollected in them the well-known figures of Sir Orlando and Sir Hugh de Burleigh. She quickly drew back, fear-

ful of being seen, and remained for some time motionless on the rampart.

Again, however, she ventured to look down, and saw them winding along the shore; and shortly after turning round a large rock, they were hid from her view. Afraid to stay any longer where she was, lest they might surprise her, as there might be some communications with the rampart, which she was ignorant of, she hastily turned back and proceeded to her apartment. It being yet very early, she met not the Lady Gertrude, or else she would have informed her of what she had seen.

She now opened the casement which was in her oratory, and looking towards the road which led to the castle, saw, to her great satisfaction, Sir Orlando and De Burleigh mounted on their steeds, and proceeding swiftly towards Manstow. Whether they had lingered about the castle with a design of surprising

the Lady Anna, or had merely taken up their abode in one of the neighbouring cottages for the night, was left to conjecture; and Anna reflecting how much the temper of the Lady Gertrude had been ruffled the preceding day, forbore to make mention of what she had seen.

After the morning repast, Anna, who was anxious to see the castle, requested permission of the Lady Gertrude to do so, who immediately acquiesced, and the old warden of the castle was ordered to attend her.

This man had held his situation in the castle in the time of the father of the late Sir Percy, and knew all its intricacies, and the histories relating to the different chambers of the castle. He had all the garrulity natural to old age; and Anna felt amused by several of his tales as he was proceeding along the spacious court-yard.

"This castle, lady," said he, "though it now appears in such order, I have be-

held scarcely any thing but a heap of ruins, hardly a wall standing, during the battles the old baron—rest his soul! used to have with the great Earl of Montgomery, between whom subsisted a dreadful quarrel. It was just there about, lady," said he, pointing to a distant rampart, "where the earl was slain as he was on the point of taking the castle. His soldiers, however, when they saw the fate of their chief, immediately retired, and so the castle was saved."

He now passed down one side of the immense pile of buildings, and at length stopped at a door, which, retiring to a great depth in the wall, shewed the immense thickness of it. "It is a long time," said the old man, with a deep sigh, "since I entered these towers where the old baron lived. His son caused them to be shut up, it was supposed, on account of some appearance which he saw there the day after the baron died. But in my opinion, lady," said

he, as he inserted the key into the lock; "his reason was, the great love he had for his father."

"Was the late baron married to the Lady Gertrude in the life-time of his father?" asked the Lady Anna.

"No, lady," replied the warden; "that marriage took place some years after."

The warden with difficulty opened the door, which brought them into a large, but low hall. A broad flight of stairs were at one end, which he now approached to. "These," said he, "lead to where the old baron used to live. They are over the hall."

Anna, as she followed the warden, stopped to look at the ruinous state every thing appeared in. The large oaken table in the hall, had fallen down at one end, the legs having given way; the benches were also dropping to pieces.

She now preceded the warden up the stairs, and entered into a chamber; but

started back at the melancholy appearance it exhibited.

The walls were hung with black cloth; and a large bed, which was in one corner of the chamber, was covered with a black pall.

"This," said the warden, "was where the baron died."

Anna shuddered; she looked at the bed, and almost expected to see the lifeless form of the baron stretched on it.

"You see, lady," continued the warden, "that whatever it was that made the young baron have the apartments locked up, it is certain that they were afraid to enter them, for they would not even take away his clothes, which were lying about."

Anna looked at a crimson surcoat, which was lying on a chair, and was going to take it up, when it dropped to pieces, being rotted by time and the dampness of the place. A rushing noise above her

made Anna turn pale; the old warden also suddenly crossed himself, and no doubt expected to see the ghost of the baron.

Anna, however, soon recovered from her alarms, by finding that they had disturbed a solitary bat which had taken up its residence in the room.

The warden now laughed at his fears, and they soon after quitted the place.

He now brought Anna through a variety of apartments, all of which exhibited the desolate effects of the busy hand of time; the paintings had long forsaken their frames, and were hanging down in fragments; the windows of most of the casements were choaked up with ivy, and scarcely afforded sufficient light to survey the objects within.

"Desolate as these apartments now look," said the warden, "I well remember the time when they were as handsome as any part of the castle that my Lady de Percy now lives in; my lord

used to keep open house, and these rooms were then inhabited by great lords and ladies; now the scene is altered indeed, perhaps the greater part of them are dead, and the servants of the castle are even fearful of entering these chambers. But I see, lady," continued he, " that you are fatigued, I will therefore only shew you the superb apartments of the baroness, from which she was carried away by the Earl of Montgomery."

Saying this, he passed through a long corridore, lighted by loop-holes, which were high up in the wall. Anna's curiosity was roused by the last speech of the warden, and she asked what he meant by her being carried away. " The story, lady, is somewhat long," replied the old warden ; " but, however, I will endeavour to relate it to you as briefly as possible."

" It seems that the baroness, before she was married, was courted by the Earl of Montgomery and the Baron de

Percy, and as she preferred the baron, the earl vowed revenge against both of them. They had not been long married, when one night as the baron was going to bed, he thought he heard a noise in the baroness's room; he listened for some time, but the noise having ceased, he thought no more about it; but in the morning, when he went to see her, she was not to be found, nor could any traces of her, or how it was she left the castle, be discovered.

"The baron did every thing he could to find her, but to no effect; he gave himself entirely up to grief, and would shut himself up in her apartments for whole days together.

"At length his suspicions fell on the Earl of Montgomery, and he defied him to single combat, charging him at the same time with having forced the baroness from the castle.

"The earl returned no answer either to

the challenge or the charge; but in about a month after, a large body of men were seen early in the morning led by the earl, preparing to surprise the castle; we, however, made a desperate resistance; but just when the castle was half demolished by fire, and the soldiers were entering through the breaches, the earl and baron met, and a dreadful battle there was between them; at length the earl fell, and his men ran away; and it was soon found out that he had by some means got the baroness out of the castle, and that she had died for grief soon after.

"The old baron was inconsolable, and never would let any body enter her apartments but himself, nor have the smallest thing removed out of them."

The warden now unlocked a door. "This lady," said he, "was her apartment." Anna entering, beheld what had once been a beautiful bed, with blue

satin furniture; the bed-clothes were all in disorder, as if some person had been dragged out of the bed.

A book, the baroness had been reading, was lying open on the table, but the damp had rendered the writing unintelligible; her robes, which she had thrown off, were lying in a heap on a couch.

A small oratory was close to the chamber; on the altar was a lute, and an ebony crucifix. The heavy step of the warden, which shook the decayed floor, made a pannel in the wainscot fall out of its place, and disclose a large aperture behind. The warden instantly advanced to it. "This must then be the place where the baroness was taken down, for there are regular steps, I see, which perhaps lead out on the side of the rock the castle is built on; and what has remained a secret for so many years, is at length discovered by mere accident."

" And do you think," demanded the Lady Anna, " that there is a way out of the castle by this passage?" " I have very little doubt of it," replied the warden, " as it must be the way the baroness was taken."

Anna now reflected on the danger of letting this passage remain open, as Sir Orlando, should he come to the knowledge of it, might effect an entrance, and carry her off; she therefore finished her survey of the castle there, and hasted to the Lady Gertrude, to inform her of the circumstance, and of her having seen Sir Orlando and his companion, walking on the beach early that morning, and also of his having seemingly proceeded towards Manstow.

The Lady Gertrude, alarmed at this intelligence, and fearful of a surprise, (for from a man of Sir Orlando's designing disposition, there was every thing to dread,) had the passage instantly closed up.

Some time elapsed, and nothing however occurred to interrupt the quiet and tranquillity that the Lady Anna enjoyed. She would, indeed, often reflect on the mysterious deportment of the sable knight, and would sometimes sigh on recollecting that he had done so.

CHAP. XXXIV.

Sir Orlando de Vortimer continued travelling on with De Burleigh towards the castle de Percy, in hopes of overtaking the Lady Anna ere she could arrive there.

A peasant, at whose cottage he had stopped to refresh himself and his horses, informed him that he had seen early the morning before, a lady, attended by one domestic, proceeding on the same road he was going.

From the description the man gave, Orlando was convinced it must be the Lady Anna, but who the domestic could be, he was still at a loss to know.

The stormy night in which the Lady Anna, through necessity was obliged to travel, prevented him from proceeding, and thus considerably delayed him; at length, the next day he arrived in the valley where Hubert was; fortunately however, for the poor faithful domestic, (who doubtless would have fell beneath his vindictive rage,) he passed the cottage where he was, and made enquiries at another, the inhabitants of which also declared they had seen a lady pass there that morning, accompanied by a knight in sable armour and surcoat, and his attendant habited in like manner.

Thunder-struck at this information, which almost made him believe the tale he had invented, he for some moments was unable to proceed; at length, recollecting the overthrow he had received, he determined, in conjunction with De Burleigh, who consented to the unknightly proceeding, to attack him

and revenge themselves for the disgrace they had received from him.

The shades of night, however, prevented them from arriving at Percy castle that night; but the next morning, mounting their steeds, they passed swiftly on, expecting to meet the Lady Anna, whom they likewise supposed would not have been able to reach the castle.

As they passed by the glen, where the engagement had taken place, they were surprised by the sight of a man who was lying motionless on the ground, which was covered with broken spears and swords.

They alighted from their steeds, and examined the body, but the breath of life was departed. From the appearance of the wound the man received, and of the blood, it was evident that the contest was recent; and Sir Orlando was distracted by the idea of the Lady Anna's

having been carried off by a banditti. He supposed, however, that the sable knight would not easily have relinquished his lovely charge; and as his eyes were not greeted with the sight of his breathless body, he concluded that they had escaped.

At length they came in sight of the ponderous battlements of Percy castle, and Orlando now concluded that Anna was safely arrived there, and had thus completely put herself out of his power. He was now slowly turning back, convulsed with rage and disappointment at thus having the cup snatched from his lips at the moment he was going to taste the delicious beverage it contained; when a thought struck him, that he would endeavour to prejudice the mind of the Lady de Percy against the Lady Anna de Vortimer; and if that would not avail to gain his ends, he would demand that lady as her guardian.

Pleased with this idea, he advanced

to the castle, and taking the horn, blew a hollow blast. Of the domestics who appeared, he enquired if the Lady Anna had arrived there; and being answered in the affirmative, he demanded if the knight who accompanied her was also in the castle; but was informed that he immediately left it after he had conducted the Lady Anna there.

Both himself and De Burleigh felt vexed at this intelligence, for they had hoped, when once they knew where he was, to have taken him by surprise, and he would have been an easy prey to their united force.

Sir Orlando now entered the spacious court-yard, and desired the domestics to acquaint the Lady de Percy, that Sir Orlando de Vortimer requested the honour of seeing her.

This message being conveyed to her, she for a while debated whether she should admit him to a conference or not; but at length she considered it best to

do so, as it would possibly prevent future trouble. Descending therefore into the state apartments, she ordered him to be admitted.

After waiting some time, which irritated the haughty spirit of Sir Orlando, he was at length ushered into the presence of the Lady Gertrude, who was surrounded by her female attendants, with the principal officers of the castle, ranged on one side of the apartment.

Sir Orlando, on entering, bowed low to the Lady Gertrude, who slightly returned his obeisance. "Lady," said he, somewhat confused on observing her distant comportment, "I have some words for your private ear."

The Lady Gertrude now made a signal to her domestics and retainers to retire. "Thou mayest now, Sir Orlando," said she, "unfold the purpose of thy visit."

Sir Orlando then, in a studied speech, expatiated largely on the ill conduct of

the Lady Anna, of his having been necessitated to confine her to her apartments, to prevent her conferences with the unknown knight, and of his conduct in offering her marriage, to clear her honour in the eyes of the world. He then shewed the necessity that there was for such a step, and concluded, "What greater proof can there be, lady, of the truth of what I have advanced, than her having been attended to this castle by the knight, who, for good reasons, no doubt, would not appear in your presence."

Lady Gertrude listened with seeming attention to his relation; and when he had made an end, she replied, "Your reasons, Sir Orlando, are not of sufficient force to make me see the necessity of a marriage between yourself and the Lady Anna; and, indeed, Sir Orlando, I fear my niece is greatly indebted to you for the cruel aspersions which have been made against her

fair fame, which I am well convinced, is unblemished, and defies the tongue of scandal or malice. Your confining the Lady Anna was an unwarrantable act, to forward your own designs, and reflects great shame on yourself."

Sir Orlando was for a while abashed at this cutting rebuke, which made him see how little his false tale had prevailed. He remained silent for some moments; and at length determined to make a formal demand of the Lady Anna. "I am sorry, lady," said he, "to find that you are so averse to the truth, and doubtless are guided by the artful tales of the Lady Anna. But since you even treat my solicitude respecting that lady with such scorn and contempt, I find myself obliged as her guardian, to demand the Lady Anna de Vortimer, at your hands, and at your peril to withhold her."

The Lady Gertrude de Percy, at this insulting speech, arose from her seat

and with a haughty air, disdaining a reply, left the chamber.

Sir Orlando, seeing by this contemptuous treatment, that he had nothing to hope from the Lady Gertrude, who had seen through his schemes, proceeded to the court-yard, and sullenly mounting his steed, joined Sir Hugh de Burleigh, who was awaiting his return on the road leading to the castle.

De Burleigh saw by the agitation of Sir Orlando, that his endeavours had not met with success. "Do not despair, Sir Orlando," said he, after he had been informed of what had happened, "perchance you may find an opportunity of carrying off the lady from the castle. Would it not be adviseable to stop at some cottage, and in the evening to examine if there are any private posterns by which we might enter in the night, and secrete ourselves in the castle, until a fit opportunity occurs for your designs?"

Sir Orlando approved of the idea; they therefore remained in the neighbourhood of the castle until the evening, when they cautiously approached its lofty walls. They, however, failed in discovering an entrance, and retired for the night. Early the next morning, ere the early lark had commenced his matin song, they renewed their search, and at last, convinced that their designs were impracticable, they retraced the road to Manstow castle, where they arrived on the fourth day.

Some days now passed, and Sir Orlando, who was in possession of the revenues of the estates, applied them in giving sumptuous banquets to his friends. Every day the grand hall echoed to the songs of the minstrels; in a successive round of festivities he passed his time, and appeared only anxious to enjoy the present moment, regardless of the account he would be obliged to give of the trust reposed in him by Sir Willoughby de Vortimer.

Meanwhile, the sable knight and his companion, as soon as the Lady Anna was safe from Sir Orlando's power within the massy walls of Percy castle, immediately proceeded to the glen where they had left the wounded robber. They found him rather better; the bleeding had stopped; but he was too faint and weak to move.

With some difficulty he replied to their enquiries, that not far from the place was a wood-cutter's cottage. Thither with great trouble they bore him; and when the shield-bearer of the sable knight had seen his features, he started with some surprise, and then questioned the man, who replied in such a manner to his interrogatories, that the attendant of the sable knight in great haste ran to meet his master, who with folded arms was walking pensively before the cottage.

He listened with great surprise to the words of his attendant, and instantly rushed into the cottage, where he held

a long discourse with the robber. Rage seemed to have banished all other passions. He breathed short; his heart beat forcibly against his side. Grasping the hilt of his sword, "O God!" said he at last, "'tis too much!—I cannot bear it!—This instant will I seek revenge! This instant will I repair to the detested monster, and tear the secret from his heart!"'

In vain did his attendant endeavour to pacify him. "Torture me not," said he, "by speaking of patience; the time is now approached. Can I want further confirmation? Thou art my tried, my faithful friend; speak no more to me on this subject, but let my steed be this instant prepared. I will away without further delay."

"My honoured master," said the shield-bearer, "I have but one favour to ask; and that is, to let me share your dangers. I have long existed but for you, and will willingly part with my life in your service."

The knight seemed affected at this discourse. "I would," said he, "spare thee this unnecessary trouble. In so just a cause as mine, what have I to fear?"

"Alas!" replied the domestic, "you know not how crafty, how capable of base acts Sir Orlando is."

"Yes," said the knight, trembling with rage; "have I not this moment received ample proof of the black infernal heart he possesses? But I will dare all. I will rush into the very bosom of the castle, and make the vile monster confess his guilt." This said, he suddenly started away, and continued walking about in great agitation till his horse was brought to him; when he instantly vaulted on it, and followed by his shield-bearer, took the road to Manstow.

As he passed by the cottage where Hubert was, he alighted to refresh himself, and to enquire after the old domestic, who had now began to recover the use of his limbs, and was delighted to hear that his beloved mistress the Lady Anna

de Vortimer had safely arrived at her destination.

The horse that the shield-bearer rode, on their second day's journey grew sick, and was hardly able to proceed. Impatient at this delay, the knight would have proceeded alone; but as he had now reflected on his present undertaking, he found it would be necessary to have his attendant with him; and he was therefore constrained to wait the recovery of the animal, which detained them on the road many days; every moment of which seemed an age to the restless knight, who breathed nothing but revenge for some deep injury he had sustained from Sir Orlando.

The monk Hildargo, in the escape of the Lady Anna, saw all those fine-drawn schemes, that had so long occupied his thoughts, totally fail. He had even in his eagerness to bring them to a conclusion, almost forgotten his designs towards his hapless captive, the Lady

Agnes. But now all his former wishes, his abandoned desires again rose in his mind, and he appeared as if he had just awoke to his horrible intents.

Many circumstances had hitherto deterred him from putting his designs in execution. Her knowledge of his atrocious acts—the death of the baron. The schemes and inventions which employed his mind respecting the Lady Anna, and a certain dread that he had on him whenever he reflected on the dreadful storm at the lonely mansion, and the horrible appearances at the chateau de St. Clair.

These ideas, however, now began to wear away; and his mind, no longer employed in inventions of fresh plots, rested on his former intentions respecting the Lady Agnes. "In that dungeon," thought he, "her cries will never be heard; and the thunder may rage long enough before it will shake the ponderous wall of this castle." All

his former thoughts occurred with redoubled force, and he determined no longer to delay, but to fix on the next night, when he went to carry her provisions, for the accomplishment of his dark purposes.

The morning of that day came, and Hildargo was reflecting on his intentions, when Sir Orlando entered his chamber, to inform him that a large party were expected that day to partake of a sumptuous banquet. Pleased at this opportunity of passing the intervening hours, the monk at the appointed time, descended into the hall, where he found assembled a great number of Sir Orlando's friends.

The guests were soon seated at the splendid board. De Vortimer appeared to have forgotten his late disappointments, and partook largely of the exhilarating draught; the saloon soon echoed to the tumultuous mirth of the assembly, while the instruments of music that

were placed in the gallery, at intervals sounded some lively strains.

In the midst of this conviviality a domestic entered to say, that a herald waited without, who refused to deliver his message to any ear but that of Sir Orlando.

" Bid him then enter here," said De Vortimer, " that we may know the purport of his coming."

At the sight of the well-known device of the Black Cloud, which the herald, who was completely cased in armour, bore on his shield, Sir Orlando turned pale. But stifling his emotion, he demanded his business in a haughty tone.

" My business is for Sir Orlando's private ear," replied the herald.

" It matters not," returned Orlando; " speak thy purpose, none are here but friends."

" Then," said the herald, " I bear this message to thee, Sir Orlando de Vortimer, from the Knight of the Black

Cloud. He taxes thee with having dealt unlike a true knight with a helpless female, in order to bring about some vile and base ends; and he dares thee to answer him in the field, ere the morrow's sun has attained his meridian height!"

While he was speaking, Sir Orlando tried to convert the agitation that disturbed him into the appearance of offended honour. "Go," said he, "tell your master, that I will answer for my conduct to the Lady Anna at the time he appoints. But who," contiued he, "is this knight, that is the champion of the Lady Anna? 'tis fitting I should know."

"He is called," answered the herald, after the device he wears.—Thou hast seen him before."

Sir Orlando changed colour as he recollected the overthrow he met with from him at the tournament; but perceiving the eyes of his companions were stedfastly fixed on him with some marks

of suspicion, since he was charged with so base an act—he endeavoured to recover his agitation. "Let the knight know," said he, "that I shall not fail to meet, and punish him for his temerity."

The herald now departed, and Orlando whispered De Burleigh who was sitting next to him, who instantly arose and left the hall.

Sir Orlando in vain endeavoured to collect his lost animation. He could have attacked the sable knight, as he had proposed to De Burleigh, and basely attempted his life; but to meet him on honourable terms in mortal combat, was what he felt himself unequal to.

At length, however, the frequent goblets of wine which he drank, contributed in some degree to rouze him from the terrors that invaded his mind, and again the hall resounded to the mirthful sallies of his gay companions, the cheerful blasts of the trumpeters, and the

hollow-toned timbrels echoed along the lofty roofs.

De Burleigh now entered the hall, and Orlando viewed him with some anxiety till he approached him. Some conversation then passed in a low voice; the countenance of De Vortimer instantly cleared up, and his whole frame seemed to partake of the joy occasioned by the information which it was apparent De Burleigh brought him.

The banquet was prolonged to a late hour, and at length the guests retired.

Hildargo, who during the jovial scene was ruminating with delight on the more luscious banquet he was determined soon to enjoy, at times was absent, and appeared deeply involved in his anticipations, which caused a glow to overspread his sallow countenance.

He took an opportunity when unobserved, to retire from the splendid board, and leaving the hall, proceeded to his apartments; there he prepared the provisions

for the unfortunate Agnes, whose ruin he was now resolved to complete; and when the midnight hour was proclaimed, taking a lamp in his hand, he hasted towards the dungeon with an agitated pace, starting at the slightest breath of wind as it sighed along the battlements of the castle, or the noise of the hoarse croaking raven, which, perched on the topmost turrets, broke on the silence around with his harsh discordant notes.

CHAP. XXXV.

The Lady Agnes de Vortimer, by the behaviour of the monk, who now never entered her chamber but in the dead of night, and without a lamp, when he only opened the door and put in the basket—saw how fearful he was of encountering her look, since he knew she was acquainted with his murderous deeds; and she felt greatly pleased that she had let him know it, as it spared her the horrible sight of the diabolical monster, who had seemed bent to destroy her peace and honour.

In order to employ her solitary moments, she again perused the narrative of Pierro, and again shuddered at the dreadful intelligence it contained. Her

long confinement had banished the rose from her cheeks, and had diffused a languor over her frame. She almost began to despair of recovering her liberty, and looked on the dreary walls of the dungeon as her tomb.

" Ye," thought she, " will behold my form moulder away; ye will be the only witnesses to my last sighs, to my last prayers for my Edmund. O merciful Creator of the universe! if he yet lives, defend him, I beseech thee, from every harm which my cruel persecutors would heap on him!" Such were the thoughts which used to occupy the mind of the sorrowful Agnes. Hope had almost deserted her; and she looked for the grim king of terrors as the only release from her woes.

The chamber she was confined in was lofty and spacious; the roof was vaulted, and the walls were of an astonishing thickness, as she could perceive by that in which the casement was fixed.

One day when she was pacing her chamber, as she was lifting her hands with a sudden exclamation of sorrow, she touched a part of the wall which sent forth a hollow sound. Her attention was instantly excited by this, and to her great delight she beheld a door, which being in a corner of the room that was darkened by the projecting frame of the door of her apartment, had hitherto escaped her notice.

With an agitated hand she lifted up the latch, and the door opening, disclosed a narrow winding flight of steps seemingly made in the wall. She immediately ascended them; they were quite dark, and she ascended a long way up when her progress was stopped by a door, which being only fastened by a latch, she quickly opened, and entered an apartment about the same size as her own, but in a more ruinous state.

The casement was broken, and the furniture, which was a couch, a chair,

and a table, were almost destroyed by the hand of time. She advanced to the casement, and for the first time since her residence in that castle, the beams of the sun shone on her, and she obtained a view of the country over a low wall which fronted the casement.

This was to her an unspeakable comfort; and as she inhaled the fresh breeze, and felt the reviving warmth of the sun, a glow of pleasure animated her features. She gazed unceasingly on the prospect before her: the green fields, brightened by the rays of the sun; the tall waving summits of the distant woods; the little hamlets that were scattered about the country; the numerous streams on which the sun glittered; and the flocks and herds that were grazing on their verdant banks.

She then admired the waving outline of the distant hills. "Would to Heaven," thought she, "that, blessed with liberty, I was a peasant, inhabiting some

lowly cottage, that I might enjoy the bounties of indulgent nature; that I might range among those pleasant groves; or, sitting on the banks of some romantic stream, enwrap my soul in heavenly meditations!"

The tear of regret, of heartfelt sorrow stood trembling on its beauteous brink. Anna wiped it away. "This at least is some comfort," said she. "I can now gaze on this delightful scene; and though it may produce many a heartfelt sigh, many a deep regret at my hapless deprivation of enjoying what I see, yet it will animate my mind to adore the wonderful works of Nature!"

Agnes left not the casement the whole of that day. She saw the lengthening shadows of the sun, beheld the glow of evening spread itself over the horizon, and watched it as it deepened into shade. She then cautiously descended the narrow flight of stairs, and with some appetite partook of her provisions;

and directly after, unwilling to be a moment absent from this new enjoyment, she again ascended, and seated herself at the casement.

The moon now diffused her silver light over the silent face of nature, which seemed hushed to repose. No noise disturbed the solemn tranquillity, save the barking of the distant watch-dog, whose vigilance brought to the mind the village near where he guarded his fleecy charge; whose peaceful inhabitants, after the toils of the day, were enjoying the blessings of repose. No harassing cares disturbed them; no horrible dreams made them start from their humble pallets: their sleep was as calm as their minds. Contented they laid down; and when the lark with his matin song soars high on the morning breeze, with merry hearts they hastily arise to their daily labour, and cheer each other with their simple lays as they plough the fruitful bosom of the earth,

or drive their bleating treasures to the rich pastures.

" Happy peasant," pensively thought Agnes, " how I envy thee! 'Tis thou who enjoyest true felicity! Thou hailest with delight the beams of the morning, and pleased survey them retire to other worlds, while I awake but to wretchedness, and oft endeavour in vain to seek repose."

" Such were the ruminations of Agnes, as she sat by the broken casement, till the cold chill of the breeze of night warned her to retire; when she descended to her apartment below, and retired to rest.

In her sleep, she thought herself seated in a gloomy cave, and a large snake was approaching her, and beginning to entwine its scaly folds round her trembling body, when it was suddenly struck to the ground by an unseen hand. She then thought herself in a large armoury, which was thickly strewed with

hostile weapons, and felt a hand impel her to a small portal; passing through which, she entered a subterraneous passage.—Starting, she awoke. "What," thought she, "can be the import of this dream? 'Tis not unlike one I had at the mansion on the sea-shore." She looked around her; the beams of the morning had not yet illumined her chamber; and she tried to compose herself once more to sleep.

Dreams again visited her slumbers, and she now imagined herself in a grand hall, adorned with all sorts of war trophies, and richly decorated and illumined with an immense number of wax-tapers. Seated on a superb throne was a knight in a sable surcoat, and armour of the same hue, by the side of a lady habited in the most magnificent manner; anon they descended, and the knight taking the lady's hand, they proceeded into a chapel, when a gloomy form arising from one of the tombs, basely

endeavours to stab the knight. All is in a moment in the greatest confusion, the chapel resounds with the clashing of swords; and Agnes terrified, awoke from her dreams.

Pale and unrefreshed she awoke. "These dreams," thought she, "must have some meaning. The last seemed to be more than usually connected. Would I had still slept; perhaps I might have been able to dicover it."

She now again ascended to the upper chamber; and as she was examining the walls, beheld, thrust into a crevice, a small volume; having hastily drawn it forth, with great delight she discovered it to be a missal; much pleased with this treasure, she kissed the sacred book, and for a long time perused the prayer to the martyrs; while reflecting on their sufferings, she began to think the less of her own. She indulged herself in their pious meditations the greater part of the day, which she passed as usual in

the upper chamber; and when the dusky hue of evening was diffused over the horizon, she sat ruminating on her hapless state; when a noise below made her start from her seat, and hastily run to the door, when she plainly heard the heavy clanking of the chains which secured the door of the passage that led to her chamber below.

Fearful lest it should be discovered that she had contrived to get into the upper apartment, and which was so great a comfort to her, she hastily descended, and closing the door, waited in expectation of the visitant who was coming at so unusual an hour.

Many footsteps were now heard in the passage close to her door, near which a consultation seemed to be held, but the thickness of the timbers which formed it, prevented Agnes from distinguishing the words.

Again the party appeared to move their paces; now soon died away; and

Agnes heard a distant door close; shortly after, she heard them retiring through the passages, and the well-known sounds of the fastening of the outward door struck on her ear.

Much surprised at the circumstance, Agnes some time ruminated on it; and at length took her accustomed seat at the casement, where she now waited till her provisions, (for that was the night she expected a fresh supply,) should be brought to her.

She had felt the whole of that day an undescribable sensation of terror, the palpitations of her heart were quick and agitated; frequent tears followed each other down her lovely cheeks, and she almost anticipated some dreadful event being on the eve of taking place.

The time was now arrived when the monk usually came, and she heard the outer portal unbarred, and then closed again; the fastenings of her door were removed, and the monk entered with a

basket and a lamp, shutting the door after him.

Agnes started at the sight of him and the light, and looking at the monk, saw such an expression of determination imprinted on his sallow countenance, which was now unusually agitated and pale, that struck her with a horrible foreboding; she turned away her eyes with sensations of affright.

Hildargo, setting down the lamp, advanced to Agnes, who sat trembling on her chair. His look, his actions, the closing of the doors, caused sensations in her, which were insupportable.

"Lady," said the monk, "you appear greatly agitated; what is it affects you so? I come to ask of you a question of some import, and which I must have answered," added he, in a determined voice.

"And what is it?" demanded Agnes, in a faltering accent.

"I wish to know, lady, how you

came to accuse me of certain crimes? and who it was that deluded your ears with the false tale?"

Agnes was silent; she reflected if she told the monk how she came by the information, he would then possess himself of the papers wrote by Pierro, which would render it impossible to make good her intentions and promises to Rosalia de Gondoni, should she ever be happily released from her sad captivity.

"Why, lady, do you not reply to my question?" demanded the monk.

"It is of little import how I came by the knowledge," said Agnes.

"But, lady," said the monk, seizing her by the arm, "I will know, or else," said he, drawing her close to his detested form; "dread the consequences. Here is no escaping, no thunder-storms to prevent my resolution, which is fixed; therefore take your choice, either to tell me how you learnt the tale you told me, or keep it secret at the expence of your honour."

Agnes endeavoured to get from the monk, but he pressed her close to his breast, while he panted with the sensations inspired by having the beauteous Agnes in his embrace. "Tell me, then, lady, this instant, nor irritate me by your silence."

Still, however, Agnes was unwilling to part with the papers; and the monk, whose countenance glowed with the fierce passion which raged throughout his frame, now hastily drew her towards the couch.

"Stop," said Agnes, terrified at his resolutions, "one moment. I learnt what I told you from—;" here her voice died away; still she was irresolute. "You trifle with me, lady," said the monk, angrily, and continued to force her along; Agnes struggled, but her strength availed little, and losing all hope, she faintly exclaimed, "It was from the papers of Pierro."

"Of Pierro!" said the monk, loosing

his hold; "And how didst thou get them? What didst thou know of that man?"

Agnes tottered to the chair, and sunk on it, for some time incapable of speech, while the monk stood before her awaiting her reply.—Again he repeated the question, and Agnes seeing the necessity, acquainted him with the manner she obtained the narrative.

"And where is it?" furiously, said the monk. "You will find it beneath the couch," said Agnes.

Hildargo hasted to the place, and drew them forth, and holding up his lamp, looked over the papers. He was greatly pleased to find, that Agnes had not received her information in any other manner, as when Pierro's narrative was destroyed, and which he intended to do as soon as he had perused it, the knowledge of his acts would be entirely confined to Agnes, whom he had so completely in his power.

While he was looking at the papers, Agnes surveyed the countenance of the monk; she saw his agitation decrease, and the composure that began to appear when he had folded them up, and laid them on the table.

"Thou wert truly careful about these papers, lady," said the monk, with a scornful look; "no doubt thou didst intend to make great use of them, shouldst thou ever get thy liberty."

"No," replied Agnes, "I should have left it to your guilty conscience to torment thee."

"Guilty conscience!" repeated the monk, "beware, lady, how you accuse me; I tell thee, that these papers are a base fabrication." "The agitation you were in," firmly replied Agnes, "when I first told you of your deeds, makes me believe the contrary."

"Does it so," said the monk, advancing to her, with a black look, and drawing a dagger from his vest; "then

this shall silence all belief." So saying, he tore away the garments that concealed her palpitating bosom, and was on the point of giving the fatal blow, when the sight of her beauteous orbs deprived him of the power. Another wish arose in his mind, and throwing aside the instrument of death, he caught Agnes, who was just on the point of fainting with terror. The sudden motion made her departing senses instantly return, and ere the monk was aware of her design, she escaped from his hold, and taking up the dagger from the floor, "Approach me now," said she, "and this shall be buried deep in your black heart."

The monk started back, a sudden fear came over him; he looked at Agnes, she seemed determined to execute her threats, despair and terror were depicted in her countenance, and he dared not to approach her. Vexed at his inconsiderate conduct, he stood for some time

gazing on her, with his arms folded; while she leant against the wall for support, still holding the dagger in her hand.

The monk, however, was not easily to be deterred from his purpose, and with a view of diverting her attention, he took up the narrative of Pierro, and was seemingly deeply engaged in perusing it.

Deceived by this, Agnes approached the chair, and sat down, when the monk, watching an opportunity, suddenly sprang on her, and wrenched the dagger from her trembling hands.

"How will you execute your threats now, lady?"

"I still rely on that deity who will ever protect the innocent," replied Agnes.

"We will try once more, lady," said the monk, dragging her off the chair. Agnes resisted his efforts for a long while; her honour, so much dearer to her than life, was at stake, but she re-

sisted to little purpose, and the monk caught her up from the floor in his arms.

She rent the air with her screams. "Angels of pity look down on me!" exclaimed she, "hear, oh hear my cries!"

The monk now laughed at her fruitless efforts, and felt secure of effecting his horrible purposes.

Again Agnes screamed with all her power; the walls of the dungeon re-echoed to her lamentations; and even hope was now no more; when the door she had discovered was burst open, and a form in sable armour rushed in, who seized the monk by the throat, and dashed him on the floor.

Agnes fell nearly senseless on the bed, the monk essayed to rise, when the armed form again seized him and hurled him to the opposite side of the dungeon.

"Stay there, vile hell-hound!" ex-

claimed he, and approaching the trembling female, threw up his visor, and Agnes beheld in her deliverer, the well-known features of her long-lost Edmund! At the same instant, the knight also recollected, in the disordered form before him, his beloved, his lamented mother!

"My mother!" he exclaimed, "and do I again behold thee, after so many horrible ages of torture and anguish, which I have endured on your account."

Agnes for a while enjoyed in silent ecstasy, the support of his filial arms; tears at length came to her assistance, and she blessed heaven for this great, this wonderful display of his goodness.

My dearest mother! my beloved Edmund! were for a long time all the words they uttered. At length, however, Edmund said, "My dear mother, we must not delay, the time is precious, De Vortimer, who had in the basest manner caused his people to seize and confine me here in his castle—"

"Good heavens!" said Agnes, "am I in De Vortimer's castle?" "Yes, dearest mother, you are, indeed! Gracious heaven!" exclaimed Edmund, "if I had not come, what would have been your situation?"

"Oh, mention it not!" said Agnes, "Where is the wretch?" "There he is," said Edmund, who now approached the form of Hildargo, which lay motionless on the ground. Edmund turned the body, blood flowed from the head and mouth; and the monk was insensible. Edmund in his furious rage, had dashed him with such violence against the wall, that the scull was fractured.

"We have no time to lose," said Edmund; "we must endeavour to effect our escape instantly." He now took up the lamp, and supporting his mother, left the dungeon; and when they had passed the outer portal, which Edmund fastened, to prevent the escape of the monk,

should he survive, he turned to one of the doors of the dungeon, which were in the large chamber, and loosing the bars, threw it open, when Agnes beheld her faithful old steward Mortimer de Veseri.

His surprise was great indeed, at beholding her. "The Saints be praised!" at length exclaimed Mortimer, "I shall now die in peace." "Talk not of dying, good Mortimer," said Edmund, "let us think of escaping, and then of revenge."

They now proceeded into the chapel, Agnes yet trembling, lest they should fall into Orlando's hands. In the aisles they beheld several doors, one of which they entered, and proceeded to the end of a long passage it opened to. Edmund cautiously unbolted the door, which terminated it; Mortimer at the same time shrouded the lamp he held, when Edmund started back on perceiving a centinel, who was pacing to and fro at

no great distance from it. He silently closed the door, and retreated back towards the chapel.

Edmund, anxious only for his mother's safety, felt a thousand alarms on her account; had he and Mortimer been alone, he would not have hesitated a moment, but would have fought his way through the castle-guard; but his charge was too precious to allow him to risk its danger.

They now again entered the chapel, and passed through a large portal at the extremity of the grand aisle, into a wide vaulted passage, which brought them into a hall of some extent. Edmund looked around him; "This," said he, "is the way I was brought into the chapel, if I recollect right; and therefore we must not expect to escape in this direction."

So saying, with a dejected air, they turned back; and when once more in

the chapel, proceeded with heavy foreboding hearts, to the next portal, which, like the others, opened into a passage. Agnes was supported by Edmund, who endeavoured to animate her drooping spirits; while he felt a thousand fears on her account. Arrived at the extremity of this passage, they opened a door, and entered into an armoury.

Here the extraordinary dream which Agnes had dreamt, occurred to her memory; the situation of the armoury was the same as that which she had seen in her vision, and she looked about for the door, which she quickly discovered. "Heaven be praised!" said she, "that door, I trust, will lead to some outlet."

Edmund sprang forward, and soon drew back the bolts, and they descended the steps, and toiled over the fragments that lay on the ground, till

the stone-work closed round a door, whose massy beams vied in strength and solidity with the wall.

Edmund and Mortimer drew back the ponderous bolts, and Agnes beheld, with unspeakable delight, the serene sky of morning, which was now just breaking over the eastern hills.

They pursued their way as quickly as the tender frame of the Lady Agnes would allow them, and passed through the gloomy shades of the forest, which appeared before them when they left the castle.

In proportion as they proceeded further from Manstow, the spirits of Agnes returned, and she began to converse with her beloved Edmund. She demanded of him a thousand questions of what had occurred to him; but he was as yet too anxious to get far from the myrmidons of Sir Orlando, to answer her questions.

"I will tell you all, my dearest mo-

ther," he said, "when I have an opportunity; at present I appear as if I was in a dream, and shall only feel myself happy when you are in a place of safety."

Agnes now ceased her enquiries, and they proceeded on the road they were in, when the deep tones of a convent bell broke on the silence around.

They now advanced to where the sound seemed to come for a considerable time, till the path became intricate, and winding up a narrow acclivity, they came to a knoll, on the summit of which was a grove of huge trees; with difficulty they forced their way through the thick underwood, which Edmund and Mortimer de Veseri endeavoured to clear away with their swords; at length they got through it, and discovered before them, a wide extended plain, and the grey walls of a convent appearing through the purple mists of the morning.

They now descended by a narrow path, and soon gained the level country, and traversing a wide uncultivated heath, at last reached the avenue which led to the religious pile.

Edmund now cast a look of affection on his mother. "In this convent," said he, "I shall leave you, till I have appealed to the king, and laid before him the base conduct of Sir Orlando de Vortimer, and awaited his decision. I shall then again, my dear mother, see you; and hope, that the years of misery I have sustained, and the uncertainty I have ever been in respecting your situation, will be repaid by passing our remaining years in the sweets of domestic happiness."

Agnes with a deep sigh listened to the speech of her son. She saw how much his indignation was rouzed by the treatment she had met with from Sir Orlando; and though as a mother, she

felt a thousand fears on his account, yet she saw, that he, as a son, could not act otherwise.

They had now reached the gates of the convent, and Edmund rang at the bell. The nuns were, however, engaged in the matin service; and they were obliged to remain at the gates till it was over.

Edmund was miserable till he saw his adored mother safe from the pursuits of Sir Orlando; and when the porteress opened the gate, he demanded to speak with the abbess. On this the Lady Agnes and himself were conducted into the parlour, where the holy mother soon appeared. Agnes told her tale, and Edmund had the pleasure of seeing her joyfully received.

"Welcome, my fair daughter," said the abbess, "to our holy walls; we shall make it our pleasure to restore you to your wonted peace of mind. Here

you will be safe from all the attempts of your enemies until your son again claims you."

Agnes embraced Edmund. "Adieu, my beloved son! Remember, whatever your future enterprizes may be, that you have a mother, who exists but in the hopes of folding you, so long absent from her, to her affectionate arms."

Edmund took leave of her, while the dew of sensibility started from his eyes. "Believe me," said he, as he was departing the parlour, "I will not do any thing unworthy of St. Clair, or the lessons I have received from my beloved mother." Saying this, he departed the convent, and again joined Mortimer, who awaited him without.

"Now," said he in a deep voice, "now for revenge. The dastard knight is afraid to meet me. I will this instant to the king, and demand a judicial combat. By that means I shall escape his vile artifices, and force him to meet me in

the field; and doubt not but the injuries my mother has sustained, will add to the keen edge of my sword."

They now retraced their steps, which was attended with the greatest danger; as the cottage where their steeds were left, was on the other side of the lake which fronted the castle, and as the beams of morning now darted over the creation, it was not unlikely but they might be observed by the inhabitants of the castle: and Edmund trembled, lest by any untoward action he should be deprived of his revenge for the many wrongs he had sustained.

When they had ascended the knoll, Edmund cast his eyes towards the castle of Manstow, and saw the pennons of Sir Orlando waving with the breeze. It appeared to him from this circumstance, that he had claimed the right to the castle since the Lady Anna had left it.

The wrongs of his mother, and the

uncertainty whether she still existed, had so completely occupied his mind, that the remembrance of the service he had done the Lady Anna was almost forgot. Now, however, her sweet form recurred to his imagination. He beheld her also persecuted by the ruthless De Vortimer; deprived of her rights; her character defamed, and obliged to fly her own castle, which now appeared to be claimed by Orlando.

"And thou too, sweet fair," said he, "shall be reinstated in thy rights, should Heaven guide my arm!" A sigh escaped him at the remembrance of her charms. The animation of her countenance; her expressive love-beaming eyes, her beauteous hair, her elegant form, rushed to his memory, and for a while, Anna, the peerless Anna occupied his thoughts. But they soon gave way to the remembrance of his mother's cruel injuries; and silently he proceeded with Mortimer through the gloomy fo-

rest, and endeavouring to avoid the castle of Manstow, he kept far away to the right, where winding amidst the hills, he came to the cottage where his horses had been taken care of since he had arrived in the precincts of the castle. When he had been blessed with the happiness of preserving her he had mourned so long after, he waited only till his steed should be equipped, and then hasted away to seek an audience of the king, before whom he meant to complain of the deep injuries himself and mother had sustained.

He rewarded the peasant for his trouble, and desiring him to mislead any person who should enquire after him as to the road he had taken. As quickly as the advanced years of Mortimer would permit him, proceeded to London, where the king at that time held his court.

He passed over a long extent of uncultivated heaths, his mind entirely en-

grossed by the situation from which he had rescued his mother; and he saw through the whole the directing hand of an All-wise Providence. At last he became faint and weary, for he had fasted for many hours, and he stopped beneath the lowly roof of a wood-cutter's abode to give rest to his faithful Mortimer, who needed it much more than himself.

They partook of the coarse viands which the cottage afforded, and refreshing themselves with a few hours repose, while the night with its gloomy shades rested on the earth, they set forward.

In this manner did they travel two days, and on the morning of the third, the distant spires of London appeared to their enquiring eyes. Edmund now with an agitated heart prepared to lay the injuries his mother and self had sustained before the king; and to demand, as was the custom of those times, per-

mission to have a public combat with his oppressor, when his arm, aided by the justice of his cause, would, he hoped, shew to the world, that though vice may for a time flourish, yet in the end it will not fail to meet the punishment it merits.

CHAP. XXXVI.

FERDINANDO SCARLATTI, (which our readers will recollect was the real name of the monk,) was a Neapolitan. His father, Ricardo Scarlatti, who was possessed of considerable property, died when he was very young, and left him the whole of his fortune; so that Ferdinando found himself at the age of fifteen, able to gratify his licentious and abandoned desires.

To recount his numerous exploits would exceed the limits of this history. One, however, we cannot forbear mentioning; which, in addition to those already recited, will shew at what an early age he engaged in scenes of vice and horror; and how he still persisted in his foul deeds.

Carlo Benoni, a young gentleman of Naples, unfortunately became intimate with Scarlatti; and little thinking to whom he was entrusting his secrets, made him acquainted with his attachment to Elmira Vicenzio, a lady of great beauty and accomplishments, who returned his passion.

Benoni demanded her in marriage of her father, who listened to his proposals with disdain, and even forbade him to visit his daughter more. In this situation the lovers agreed on a private union, and made Scarlatti acquainted with their resolution, who undertook to provide a priest to marry them; which was accordingly performed. It was agreed between the happy pair, that at midnight Elmira should admit her husband at a private door in the garden. Unfortunately Scarlatti overheard the conversation; and being struck with the charms of Elmira, determined to take advantage of the circumstance.

He therefore commissioned a party of his people to lay in wait for Benoni, and to seize him as he was going to fulfil his appointment. Every thing succeeded to his wish. Benoni was confined in a dark chamber of a house hired for that purpose; and his cloak, in which he was to muffle himself up, was taken from him.

Scarlatti, habited in this garment, proceeded to the garden gate; and giving the signal which he knew had been agreed on, was admitted by the unsuspecting Elmira, and quitted her not till the morning began to dawn.

Then sated with the luscious feast, he hastily withdrew, and ordered Benoni to be released; who in despair at the disappointment, and full of wonder, who it could be that had thus confined him till it was too late for him to think of going to Elmira, returned completely miserable to his house; where he immediately wrote to Elmira, explaining the

cause that had kept him from fulfilling the dear engagement, and bewailing his cruel fate.

Elmira in the most dreadful agitation replied to his letter; an explanation took place, and the unhappy lady found she had been dishonoured by some person who must have been privy to their meeting. Their suspicions were immediately fixed on Ferdinando. Benoni instantly repaired to Scarlatti, and taxed him with the infernal deeds, which had for ever ruined the peace of himself and his Elmira.

Scarlatti seemed surprised at his discourse, and averred his innocence of the charge; but the proofs were too strong against him. He therefore challenged Scarlatti to meet him the next morning: but Benoni was found lying dead in the streets that night; and the hapless Elmira, on her recovery from a dreadful fever, into which the horrible agitations of her mind threw her, placed herself

in a convent, there to pass the remnant of her wretched life.

Such were the acts in which Scarlatti took delight. Our reader is acquainted with his conduct to Laura and the Compte Marino, who were both sacrificed to his vengeance.

When he quarrelled with Bardino, he immediately disclosed the whole of that horrible transaction to Marino's family; and on promise of a pardon for the share he had in it, and also in consideration of a reward, he undertook to assassinate Ferdinando. Scarlatti instantly fled with Pierro to the lonely mansion on the sea-shore. His flight was considered as an avowal of his guilt, and Marino's relatives laid the circumstance before the king, who ordered his estates to be confiscated. Thus situated, Scarlatti had no longer the power of subsistence; and in order to secure himself from the attempts of Marino's people, who had vowed vengeance against him,

he assumed the name of Hildargo, and entered a monastery, where he knew he would be safe; and he cared little at the idea of breaking his vows, if he should be able to get his possessions restored to him; which he doubted not he should do at some future period by the assistance of a bribe, and by which means he could also silence the remaining family of Marino, by means too horrible to mention.

The beauty of the Lady Agnes raised his desires, and he was determined to possess her. He therefore endeavoured to ingratiate himself in the good opinion of the Baron de St. Clair by an affectation of religion, which he well knew how to assume; and at length obtained permission from the superior of the monastery to reside at the chateau, as confessor to his family.

Thus far every thing succeeded to his wishes. But he dared not let the Lady Agnes have the least idea of his inten-

tions with respect to her; for he well knew her virtue would reject him, and his character would be lost. He therefore waited a convenient opportunity for the accomplishment of his purposes; when the baron made his will, and was on the point of taking his departure for the army.

It occurred to him, that now an opportunity offered to possess himself of a considerable sum of money which the baron had left him in his will, and to remove the greatest obstacle to his designs on his intended victim. Pierro was therefore commissioned to execute the horrible deed, as has been related. But while he was absent, Bardino at length traced the monk to the monastery; and from thence he was directed to the chateau de St. Clair.

Hildargo was walking in the forest near the chateau, when to his fear-struck eyes appeared Bardino, hastening towards him.

Hildargo knew his errand, and fled with the greatest precipitancy to the chateau, Bardino following him. He, however, escaped; but from this moment he was tormented with a thousand fears. He did not dare to stir from the chateau, lest he should be assassinated; or to reveal his fears to any one, lest it should cause an enquiry to be made concerning his former mode of life. When he slept, he awoke in horror, expecting to behold the blood-thirsty villain who sought his life.

He, however, determined to stay where he was till he had seen Pierro; and then, on some pretence, to leave the chateau for a period, to avoid Bardino.

No sooner had he, therefore, seen this horrid emissary, and had learnt that the baron was no more, than pretending he had made a vow to perform a pilgrimage, he hastily left the chateau, looking fearfully behind, expecting every moment to see Bardino in pursuit of him.

He travelled on in this manner the whole of that day, traversing an extensive forest, and avoiding the roads which were made in it, struck into its gloomy recesses; and the shades of night beheld him pale and weary, resting his languid frame on the roots of a tree, unable to proceed, quite uncertain whither he was going, and only anxious to lengthen the distance between him and the chateau, near which lurked Bardino.

When the rays of the morning broke through the masses of foliage which were above him, he arose, and forcing by the thick underwood, slowly proceeded through the wood. He now looked anxiously around him, in hopes of discovering a habitation where he might procure some provisions, for he was exhausted by fasting the whole of the preceding day; entering into a more open part of the forest, he beheld at a distance before him some ruined turrets,

which rose above the surrounding trees; to them he directed his course, and soon entered on what appeared once to have been an avenue, but now was almost overgrown by young trees.

An immense pile of buildings appeared before him, but entirely in ruins; as he was advancing towards it, he beheld, slowly emerging from a small postern, an aged figure, leaning on a staff. Hildargo instantly approached him and crossing the ruinous drawbridge, he approached the recluse, whose beard descended to his girdle, a long coarse garment tied round the waist with a cord, was his humble clothing.

Surprise at seeing a human creature there, kept him silent for some moments; but Hildargo said, "Whoever you are who inhabit these ruined walls, give me, I pray you, some refreshment, for I have lost my way in these secluded parts."

"The simple fare I live on," said the

recluse, " is at your service ; follow me to my humble abode." Saying this, he turned back, and opening the door, crossed what had formerly been the guard-chamber. The roof of which was now lying in ruins on the floor. The recluse had made a kind of path among them, which led out into the court, that was spacious and gloomy, overgrown with rank weeds and grass.

The old man now entered a chapel, and at the extremity of the aisle, welcomed the monk to his abode, which was a small chamber, with a pallet in it, and a bench with a little table. Here Hildargo seated himself, while the recluse spread before him his little stores of dried fruits, brown bread, and milk ; " These," said he, " the neighbouring villages amply supply me with ; therefore I hope you will do justice to your humble fare."

The monk hastily seized the invigorating viand, of which he was in such

great need; and when he had concluded his repast, he laid down on the pallet, and free from his fears respecting Bardino, he fell into a deep sleep, from which he did not awake till the evening.

Finding that he was alone, he arose from the pallet, and proceeding through the ruined chapel, entered the court-yard; some thoughts of staying in that place now entered his mind; there he might remain without fear of Bardino, till he had again returned to Naples. Full of this idea, when he saw the recluse coming from his evening walk, he approached him, and by his artful discourse, wound himself into the good opinion of the old man, who being weary of the solitary life he led, joyfully accepted the monk for his companion.

A few days now passed, when Hildargo, whose disturbed conscience seldom permitted him to enjoy sound repose, perceived that the recluse used to rise in the dead of night, and taking a

lamp, leave the place; his curiosity was excited by this circumstance, and he determined the next night to observe where he went to.

Accordingly, immediately after the old man had left the chamber, he cautiously arose and followed him through the chapel; the recluse stopped at the altar, and taking a key, opened a door which was on one side of it. Hildargo from behind a column, observed his movements; and when the old man had entered in, he crept from his hiding-place, and advanced to the place his companion had passed into.

A long flight of steps appeared before him; and the recluse, with a lamp in his hand, was descending them; he silently followed him, and when arrived at the bottom of the steps, he saw the lamp at some distance from him, and by its pale rays discovered he was in a large vaulted cemetery; advancing still further, he saw the old man unlock a coffer, in

which was a quantity of jewels, and other valuable articles.

What a sight was this for the greedy monk! he could now, by getting them in his possession, endeavour to carry into effect his plans with regard to silencing the relatives of Marino, and if possible Bardino also; and then he would, knowing that there would be no one to accuse him, demand his estates.

Full of this idea he hastily stole back again to the chamber; and when the old man returned, feigned to be asleep.

It was a matter of some difficulty for him to find an opportunity, as the recluse seldom left the chapel or court-yard, to effect his purpose; and he waited some days in hopes he would go to the village.

Every night the old man visited his darling treasure; and the monk, who watched him, remarked that he kept the key of the door, which was beneath the altar, always about him.

He therefore formed his resolution; and one night, when they had some time retired to rest, he got up, and awaking the terrified recluse, he presented a dagger to his breast, and threatened to bury it in his heart if he did not give up the key of the cemetery.

Trembling at the sight of the glittering instrument of death, for the embers yet glowed on the hearth, he gave up the key, which Hildargo seizing, took some cords and tied the legs and arms of the old man, who lay groaning and trembling with affright; then taking up a lamp, and lighting it, he repaired hastily to the cemetery, and opening the coffer, beheld with delight the treasures it contained.

It appeared to him that the jewels which he saw had adorned some of the relics and other things, which it was customary to have in chapels, and which it was likely the old man had found in

his researches about the ruins, and had conveyed for security to the cemetery.

Whatever was of value he took out, and then left the place, and without releasing the old man, pursued his way to Naples, laden with the jewels, which he concealed in various parts of his garments. At the next village he procured a mule, and directions as to his road, on which he travelled many days without meeting any extraordinary occurrence, ruminating on the steps he should take on his arrival.

He was now within a few hours journey of the place, and was looking about for some habitation, when he beheld, through the gloom of evening, a building not far distant, he immediately hastened to it, but on his approach he discovered the ruins of Sporzzini, the known residence of banditti; hastily he turned away, when he suddenly found himself surrounded, and in an instant dragged

off his mule; drawing his poignard he defended himself some time from a ferocious gang who had seized him; but at length received a wound in his arm, which rendered it useless. In the exertions he had made, some of his ill-got treasure dropped on the ground; and this circumstance occasioned them to search his garments; and when the gang had stripped him of all he was possessed of, they left him nearly naked, and insensible from the loss of blood.

A peasant who chanced to pass that way early in the morning, discovered the body, and finding some remains of life, conveyed it to his cottage, and having dressed the wounds, which were many, and laid it on a pallet, Hildargo, with a deep groan, opened his eyes, and soon his recollection returning, he mourned the total destruction of his hopes.

When he was able, the peasant had him taken to a monastery, where he remained till his wounds were healed; and

he took upon himself to perform the duties of the monastery with the rest of the fathers. A convent was near the place, and Hildargo, with the other monks, often attended at the performance of mass, and other religious ceremonies.

One evening a messenger from the convent came to request the attendance of one of the fathers on a nun who was dying. Hildargo being directed by the superior to perform this duty, proceeded to the convent, and entered the cell where the nun lay.

The place being cleared of the sorrowing sisters, (for the departing nun was greatly beloved by them,) the abbess alone remaining. Hildargo stood by the side of the pallet, and with horror beheld in the dying nun that Elmira whom he some years back had, by his infernal acts, robbed of her peace of mind. The nun knew him not, for his countenance was much altered by time, by the illness he had just recovered

from, and the agitation of his mind at so unexpectedly beholding the victim of his diabolical schemes.

" Father," said Elmira, " you see before you, one who will soon in the grave, forget the misery that has shortened her life. I have never disclosed the real cause of my unceasing grief. I feel that my moments are numbered, and ere I am no more, will tell my short tale, as a warning to all to avoid the disobedience I was guilty of, the punishment for which fell heavily upon me. Contrary to the will of my father, I privately married a Signor Benoni, who unfortunately confided the secret to a wretch, a horrible monster called Ferdinando Scarlatti !"

Here Hildargo trembled with the sudden emotion of his accusing conscience, while a faint hectic glow overspread the pallid features of the nun ; and she continued with difficulty the relation.

" This vile man having become ac-

quainted with the time of the meeting between my husband and myself, took advantage of the circumstance, and I lost my honour and my peace of mind for ever; and not content with that, Scarlatti caused the unfortunate Benoni to be murdered!"

Hildargo here drew the cowl over his face, he saw the eyes of the abbess fixed upon him; he trembled lest he should be known; while Elmira continued.

"Since that dreadful time I have devoted my days to sorrow and repentance, and hope that my miserable life has been some expiation for my disobedience."

Hildargo's emotions were so great, that he was unable to speak. The abbess observed it; "You seem unwell, holy father," said she, "the tale is indeed affecting."

"I am, daughter," replied Hildargo, with some difficulty.

At the sound of his voice, the nun

cast her eyes on his countenance. In an instant she recollected in the monk, the source of all her misery. " Oh, God!" wildly she exclaimed, " it is " Scarlatti himself, to whom I am confessing! he comes to behold the effects of his horrible acts. Save me, holy mother! Oh save me from him."

Saying these words, overcome with the excess of her grief, with a deep groan, she sunk into the chilling arms of death.

CHAP. XXXVII.

The abbess with an extraordinary presence of mind instantly left the cell, and fastened the door after her, leaving the panic-struck Hildargo with the cold corpse of the unfortunate Elmira.

Hastily he rushed to the door, and attempted to force it; but in vain: it resisted all his efforts. He then tried the casement: it opened; but the height from the ground precluded all possibility of effecting his escape. When he turned round, the dead body of Elmira met his view. Inwardly he cursed the pale lips that had given utterance to her words; and turning away his face from the ghastly object, in an agony of despair for a long time paced the cell.

At length a confused noise of foot-

steps was heard in the corridore. Hildargo turned pale, and trembled with affright. The door now opened, and a party of the lay brethren of the convent seized him. Unable to resist, from the weakness of his frame after his illness, he was taken to the monastery, and brought before the superior.

"Who art thou," said he, "that hast assumed the garb of religion? Tell thy name."

Hildargo disdainfully replied, "Neither in my name or my profession have I wandered from the truth; and I demand why I am thus treated?"

"We have reason to suspect you," replied the father, "to be a man who is guilty of many atrocious acts. The holy abbess has made me acquainted with your being discovered to be such, by a dying nun."

"And is it on the exclamation of one, whose senses were wandering with the agonies of her corporeal substance, that

you would thus treat a son of the holy church? Beware abbot, how you proceed in this business; my character may not be aspersed with impunity."

"Whatever I do," firmly replied the abbot, "I shall take care not to deviate from what is just; I shall therefore direct that you be confined till I can send to Naples, to have your person identified. And should it be found that my zeal has carried me too far, I am not fearful of your threats, which almost confirm me in my suspicions."

The abbot now directed the monk Hildargo to be confined in the dungeon of the monastery; and the lay brothers conducted him down a long flight of steps, which, by their uneven and irregular shape, seemed to be hewn in the rock on which the edifice was built. At length they gained the bottom, the floor of which was the solid rock.

Hildargo saw with deep emotions of fear, that he was going to be confined

in some dungeon which was placed far beneath the surface of the earth. His guides advanced a considerable way along the passage, and at length stopped at a door which was cased with iron, and secured by massy bolts. This the brothers unclosed, and led the monk into it; and then retiring, fastened the door.

Hildargo, by the light of the lamp which his conductors carried, saw that the dungeon was destitute of furniture. A heap of straw was lying in one corner, on which the light of the lamp had just shone as the door was closing.

He listened to the retiring steps of the brethren; and when all was silent, he looked around him. High up the wall on one side of the dungeon a narrow grate admitted air, and the faint glimmering of the remaining twilight.

The monk now began to despair. For some time, in a situation not to be described, he paced the dungeon in great agitation; till at length, weary

and distracted with his fears, he threw himself on the straw: but instantly started up with inconceivable horror—he had laid himself upon a skeleton!

It was some time before he was able to conquer the dreadful sensations excited by this circumstance. He had removed himself from the straw as far as he could; and he remained leaning against the wall, with his eyes fixed in the direction where the frail remnants of mortality lay. He well knew the severity of monastic punishments. "And 'tis likely," thought he, "that the poor wretch, whose tomb is this dungeon, was left to perish for want of food. Such, perhaps, will be my lot. But that," said he, feeling the hilt of the poignard he constantly carried, "I can happily prevent."

In such miserable ruminations passed the long night; and when the returning light of day descended in the dungeon, he carefully examined the walls. It ap-

peared to him not impossible, could he raise himself to the grate, that he might be able to remove the bars, as they seemed to be much eat by the consuming rust.

The moments were precious. Drawing his poignard from his bosom, he picked out the cement which was between the stones of the wall, till he obtained a sufficient hold for his hands, and a rest for his feet. Thus he proceeded, till at length he raised himself to the grating, and laid hold of one of the bars, which instantly gave way with his weight, and he fell to the floor.

Much hurt, and stunned by his fall, he was unable for some time to continue his attempts, in which he had reason to think he should succeed. He now heard some paces in the passage, and a lay brother entered with a basket of provisions, which he laid on the floor without speaking, and retired. Hildargo scarcely breathed while he was in the

dungeon, for fear he should observe the broken bars and the holes he had made in the wall. Happily, however, he found his fears were vain; and he again climbed up, and laying hold of the stone frame of the grating with one hand, he with the other forced away two bars more. He now raised himself higher, and looking through the apertures he had made, which was of sufficient size to allow him to pass through, he found that it looked into the gardens of the monastery.

It was impossible for him to venture out without fear of discovery, as the monks were in the gardens almost the whole of the day; he therefore was obliged to wait till the dusky livery of evening should favour his designs.

He shuddered as the skeleton met his view; and going up to it, discovered an iron hoop round the bones; to which a chain was affixed, that was fastened to the wall. It was therefore plain, that the

poor wretch had been starved to death; and it was probable that the dungeon had not been opened since that period. He shuddered when he recollected that he had laid himself the preceding night on the bare bones, and turned away with horror from the sight. He partook of the provisions which had been brought to him; and often looked up to the grate, in hopes that his eyes would be greeted with the misty approach of evening.

At length the gloom in his dungeon thickened; and when he judged it sufficiently dark for his purpose, he prepared to depart. By the help of the holes he had made in the wall, he raised himself to the grating, through which he got with ease, and to his delight entered the gardens of the monastery.

It being the time when the monks were engaged in prayer, he knew there was little danger of his being seen, and the increasing shades of night would

soon render it impossible. He looked with great anxiety at the wall which enclosed the gardens, and which he was at a great loss how to ascend. At length, as he was walking under the wall, he saw a tree, whose branches stretched far over it. He climbed up the tree, and proceeded by the help of a branch, to the wall, which was too high for him to leap, without great danger of hurting himself. However, he well knew the consequences of his being discovered; and trusting to the branch, he left the wall, and clung to it, till coming, near the end, it bent down, and by that means greatly shortened the distance between him and the ground, on which he now alighted, and hastily proceeded on.

Fear lent him wings, and ere the day had dawned he found himself some leagues from the monastery. He knew it was not likely that he would be discovered till the time that his provisions

would be brought him, and he now began to hope that he should escape from the imminent danger that had threatened him.

He continued his route over the country, which was entirely unknown to him, and at the decline of the day rested himself in the cabin of a goat-herd. He now determined on shaping his course to the village near the lonely mansion where he had desired Pierro to live; and after a tedious journey at length arrived there, exhausted by the dreadful fatigues he had undergone.

Freed from all fears of the pursuit of the monks, his next care was to enquire after Bardino; and on Pierro's avowal that he had not seen him, he began to feel more composed. He determined on revisiting the chateau de St. Clair, since it was not probable that Bardino would again expect to find him there; and the beauties of Agnes still hung upon his memory.

After he had staid a few days in Pierro's cottage to rest himself, he proceeded to the chateau; but what was his anguish and disappointment, to find the Lady Agnes married to Sir Orlando de Vortimer during his absence, which had somewhat exceeded two years. His hopes now began to droop. In De Vortimer he had to deal with a disposition widely different from that of the Baron de St. Clair.

Sir Orlando soon developed his real character, and opened to him his designs respecting the estates belonging to the Lady Agnes and her son Edmund; and in consideration of a large reward, he procured, as has been related, the will, and papers containing the titles to them.

Great was the delight and exultation of Hildargo, when requested by De Vortimer to go in pursuit of the Lady Agnes, on its being discovered that she had fled from the chateau, in order to proceed to England to lay her injuries

before the king, he lost no time in getting ready; and he promised Sir Orlando that, should he find her, he would convey her to a residence which he possessed, where she and her son would be safe from all possibility of escape.

De Vortimer, delighted at the plan of the monk, promised handsomely to reward him; and he set out in the hopes of at last reaping the rich harvest he had so long panted to possess.

When with the Lady Agnes he arrived at the habitation of Pierro, whom he had intended to have sent forward to prepare the lonely mansion for his reception, and saw him dead, he did not feel displeased at the circumstance, because one of the witnesses of his atrocious acts had it no longer in his power, had he been so inclined, to betray him. He looked about the hut, fearful lest he might have left any papers behind him. Not however perceiving any, he imme-

diately went to the coffer, and opening the concealed drawer with which he was acquainted, he took from thence the casket Pierro had taken from the Baron de St. Clair, which was full of valuable jewels, and then departed the hut, leaving it to be the tomb of the wretched remains of Pierro.

During the whole of that journey, the fear of meeting Bardino constantly preyed upon his mind; and when he had arrived at the mansion, and had heard the Lady Agnes declare that she had seen a figure glide past the door, his fears made him instantly conclude that it was his bitter enemy; knowing therefore that he must be determined, or lose his life, he left the chamber, and concealing his lamp, he drew the poignard from beneath his garments, and awaited in the passage, in which he had not long been, when he heard some paces softly approaching near where he

stood : rushing towards the person, he struck him several times with the deadly instrument, and with a groan the mysterious visitor fell on the floor.

Hildargo now hasted for his lamp, and to his great delight beheld the well-known features of Bardino in the dying wretch, who, it appears, had by accident got into the mansion, intending to make it his abode during the night, as no village was near.

Thus the monk was eased of his fears respecting the agents he had employed, ever being able to accuse him ; and he now only awaited the time when De Vortimer should present him with a sum sufficient to enable him to return to Naples, and endeavour to obtain the restoration of his estates.

This, however, De Vortimer was not able to do, on account of the mysterious manner in which the papers had been convéyed away, and which could never

after be found ; and in consequence, Sir Orlando, not having the means of maintaining the monk and the Lady Agnes, was obliged to direct him to bring her to the castle of Manstow.

The providential escapes she had from his abandoned designs, have been re-recounted; and when Hildargo was again on the point of making further attempts, he was prevented, by the impatience of Sir Orlando for him to proceed to the chateau de St. Clair, to try if he could meet with success in his search for the papers.

This the monk was far from being averse to undertake; for he secretly determined, if he should be fortunate enough to find them, that he would in the name of Sir Orlando, dispose of the estates, and immediately proceed to Naples.

Though he failed in his search for them, yet he was fortunate enough

to find some valuable jewels in the cabinet; and these, added to the casket which had belonged to the Baron de St. Clair, he began to hope would be sufficient, with a small assistance from De Vortimer, to execute his plans, which were, to hire assassins to destroy those relatives of the Compte Marino, who sought his life, and to bribe certain officers of the state to intercede for him with the king for the restoration of his property.

This horrid plan he was a second time disappointed of carrying into effect by the treachery of his guide, and he returned to De Vortimer with little hopes of ever being able to perform what he had so greatly at his heart to do.

Hope, however, again began to dawn when Sir Willoughby died, and had bequeathed a considerable sum of money to enable him, as he expressed it, to endow a

monastery; and De Vortimer promised to reward him for his past services, and to give him besides, a handsome gratuity, if, through his assistance, he should be able to effect a marriage with the Lady Anna.

The monk, as has been seen, used his utmost exertions to bring about so desirable a circumstance, and in which he was so much interested, that his abandoned designs on the Lady Agnes were for a time forgotten. Still, however, he was doomed to meet with disappointments; and in the fortunate escape of the Lady Anna, he began to despair, and his mind, no longer occupied by the much wished-for possession of means to effect his purposes, he again thought of his hapless captive, and to put in exetion what he had been so often and so singularly rendered incapable of performing, and to forget for a while his disappointments in the ecstatic delights

his heated imagination depicted to him, as existing in the possession of the beautiful Agnes.

Thus thought the monk; and while with eager haste, he was approaching to taste of the luscious banquet, the piercing eye of Providence was on him; and in the moment, when he least expected it, when his very soul was fixed on the perpetration of an act, at which human nature recoils with horror and detestation, he met the due reward of his crimes from the hand of the son whose father he destroyed, and whose mother, at that moment, was on the point of becoming a victim to his lawless, villainous desires.

Thus does the protecting hand of the Deity attend those who look to him for succour and comfort, while those who regard him not, are foiled in all their endeavours, and at the very moment

when the cup of their desires is at their lips, dashes it away, and overwhelms them with the punishment they so justly deserve.

END OF THE THIRD VOLUME.

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